DRAKE

AN ENGLISH EPIC

ALFRED NOYES

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DRAKE

AN ENGLISH EPIC

BOOKS I-XII

SIR FRANCIS DRAKE

From an Original Painting

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AN ENGLISH EPIC

BOOKS I-XII

BY

ALFRED NOYES

NEW YORK
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From an Original Painting . . . *Frontispiece*

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DRAKE

PROLOGUE TO AMERICAN EDITION

I

ENGLAND, my mother,
Lift to my western sweetheart
One full cup of English mead,
breathing of the may!
Pledge the may-flower in her face that you
and ah, none other,
Sent her from the mother-land
Across the dashing spray.

II

Hers and yours the story:
Think of it, oh, think of it—
That immortal dream when El Dorado flushed
the skies!
Fill the beaker full and drink to Drake's
undying glory,
Yours and hers (Oh, drink of it!)
The dream that never dies.

III

Yours and hers the free-men
Who scanned the stars and westward sung
When a king commanded and the Atlantic
thundered "Nay!"
Hers as yours the pride is, for Drake our first
of seamen
First upon his bow-sprit hung
That bunch of English may.

IV

Pledge her deep, my mother;
Through her veins thy life-stream runs!
Spare a thought, too, sweetheart, for my mother
o'er the sea!
Younger eyes are yours; but ah, those old eyes
and none other
Once bedewed the may-flower; once,
As yours, were clear and free.

V

Once! Nay, now as ever
Beats within her ancient heart

All the faith that took you forth to seek your heaven alone:
Shadows come and go; but let no shade of doubt dissever,
Cloak, or cloud, or keep apart
Two souls whose prayer is one.

VI

Sweetheart, ah, be tender—
Tender with her prayer to-night!
Such a goal might yet be ours!—the battle-flags be furled,
All the wars of earth be crushed, if only now your slender
Hand should grasp her gnarled old hand
And federate the world.

VII

Foolish it may seem, sweet!
Still the battle thunder lours:
Darker loom the Dreadnoughts as old Europe goes her way!
Yet your hand, your hand, has power to crush that evil dream, sweet;

You, with younger eyes than ours
And brows of English may.

VIII

If a singer cherishes
Idle dreams or idle words,
You shall judge—and you'll forgive: for, far
away or nigh,
Still abides that Vision without which a people
perishes:
Love will strike the atoning chords!
Hark—there comes a cry!

IX

Over all this earth, sweet,
The poor and weak look up to you—
Lift their burdened shoulders, stretch their fettered
hands in prayer:
You, with gentle hands, can bring the
world-wide dream to birth, sweet,
While I lift this cup to you
And wonder—will she care?

X

Kindle, eyes, and beat, heart!
Hold the brimming beaker up!
All the may is burgeoning from East to golden West!
England, my mother, greet America, my sweetheart:
—Ah, but ere I drained the cup
I found her on your breast.

EXORDIUM

WHEN on the highest ridge of that strange land,
Under the cloudless, blinding tropic blue,
Drake and his band of swarthy seamen stood
With dazed eyes gazing round them, emerald fans
Of palm that fell like fountains over cliffs
Of gorgeous red anana bloom obscured
Their sight on every side. Illustrious gleams
Of rose and green and gold streamed from the plumes
That flashed like living rainbows through the glades.
Piratic glints of musketoon and sword,
The scarlet scarves around the tawny throats,
The bright brass ear-rings in the sun-black ears,
And the calm faces of the negro guides
Opposed their barbarous bravery to the noon:
Yet a deep silence dreadfully besieged

EXORDIUM

Even those mighty hearts upon the verge
Of the undiscovered world. Behind them lay
The old earth they knew. In front they could
not see
What lay beyond the ridge. Only they heard
Cries of the painted birds troubling the heat
And shivering through the woods; till Francis
Drake
Plunged through the hush, took hold upon a tree,
The tallest near them, and clomb upward, branch
By branch.
And, lo! as he swung clear above
The steep-down forest, on his wondering eyes
Mile upon mile of rugged shimmering gold
Burst the unknown immeasurable sea.
Then he descended; and with a new voice
Vowed that, God helping, he would one day plough
Those virgin waters with an English keel.

So here before the unattempted task,
Above the Golden Ocean of my dream
I clomb and saw in splendid pageant pass
The wild adventures and heroic deeds

Of England's epic age—a vision lit
With mighty prophecies, fraught with a doom
Worthy the great Homeric roll of song,
Yet all unsung and unrecorded quite
By those who might have touched with Raphael's hand
The large imperial legend of our race,
Ere it brought forth the braggarts of an hour,
Self-worshippers who love their imaged strength,
And as a symbol for their own proud selves
Misuse the sacred name of this dear land,
While England to the Empire of her soul,
Like some great Prophet passes through the crowd
That cannot understand; for he must climb
Up to that sovran thunder-smitten peak
Where he shall grave and trench on adamant
The Law that God shall utter by the still
Small voice, not by the whirlwind or the fire.
There, labouring for the Highest in himself,
He shall achieve the good of all mankind;
And from that lonely Sinai shall return
Triumphant o'er the little gods of gold
That rule their little hour upon the plain.

EXORDIUM

Oh, thou blind master of these opened eyes,
Be near me, therefore, now; for not in pride
I lift lame hands to this imperious theme;
But yearning to a power above mine own
Even as a man might lift his hands in prayer.
Or as a child, perchance, in those dark days
When London lay beleaguered and the ax
Flashed out for Rome in England; and the blood
Of martyrs made a purple path for Spain
Up to the throne of Mary; as a child
Gathering with friends upon a winter's morn
For some mock fight between the hateful prince
Philip and Thomas Wyatt, all at once
Might see in gorgeous ruffs embastioned
Popinjay plumes and slouching hats of Spain,
Gay shimmering silks and rich encrusted gems,
Gold collars, rare brocades, and sleek trunk-hose
The Ambassador and peacock courtiers come
Strutting along the white snow-strangled street,
A walking plot of scarlet Spanish flowers,
And with one cry a hundred boyish hands
Put them to flight with snowballs, while the wind
All round their Spanish ears hissed like a flight

Of white-winged geese: so may I wage perchance
A mimic war with all my heart in it,
Munitioned with mere perishable snow,
Which mightier hands one day will urge with steel.
Yet may they still remember me as I
Remember, with one little laugh of love,
That child's game, this were wealth enough for me.

Mother and love, fair England, hear my prayer;
Help me that I may tell the enduring tale
Of that great seaman, good at need, who first
Sailed round this globe and made one little isle,
One little isle against that huge Empire
Of Spain, whose might was paramount on earth,
O'ertopping Babylon, Nineveh, Greece and Rome,
Carthage and all huge Empires of the past,
He made this little isle, against the world,
Queen of the earth and sea. Nor this alone
The theme; for, in a mightier strife engaged
Even than he knew, he fought for the new faiths,
Championing our manhood as it rose
And cast its feudal chains before the seat
Of kings;—nay, in a mightier battle yet

EXORDIUM

He fought for the soul's freedom, fought the fight
Which, though it still rings in our wondering ears,
Was won then and for ever—that great war,
That last Crusade of Christ against His priests,
Wherein Rome fell behind a thunderous roar
Of ocean triumph over burning ships
And shattered fleets, while England, England rose,
Her white cliffs laughing out across the waves,
Victorious over all her enemies.
And while he won the world for her domain,
Her loins brought forth, her fostering bosom fed
Souls that have swept the spiritual seas
From heaven to hell, and justified her crown.
For round the throne of great Elizabeth
Verulam, Burleigh, Sidney, Spenser, More,
Clustered like stars, rare Jonson like the crown
Of Cassiopeia, Marlowe ruddy as Mars,
And over all those mighty hearts arose
The soul of Shakespeare brooding far and wide
Beyond our small horizons, like a light
Thrown from a vaster sun that still illumes
Tracts which the arc of our increasing day
Must still leave undiscovered, unexplored.

Mother and love, fair England, hear my prayer,
As thou didst touch the heart and light the flame
Of wonder in those eyes which first awoke
To beauty and the sea's adventurous dream
Three hundred years ago, three hundred years,
And five long decades, in the leafy lanes
Of Devon, where the tallest trees that bore
The raven's matted nest had yielded up
Their booty, while the perilous branches swayed
Beneath the boyish privateer, the king
Of many young companions—Francis Drake;
So hear me and so help, for more than his
My need is, even than when he first set sail
Upon that wild adventure with three ships
And three-score men from grey old Plymouth Sound,
Not knowing if he went to life or death,
Nor caring greatly, so that he were true
To his own sleepless and unfaltering soul,
Which could not choose but hear the ringing call
Across the splendours of the Spanish Main
From ever fading, ever new horizons,
And shores beyond the sunset and the sea.

EXORDIUM

Mother and sweetheart, England; from whose
breast,
With all the world before them, they went forth,
Thy seamen, o'er the wide uncharted waste,
Wider than that Ulysses roamed of old,
Even as the wine-dark Mediterranean
Is wider than some tide-relinquished pool
Among its rocks, yet none the less explored
To greater ends than all the pride of Greece
And pomp of Rome achieved; if my poor song
Now spread too wide a sail, forgive thy son
And lover, for thy love was ever wont
To lift men up in pride above themselves
To do great deeds which of themselves alone
They could not; thou hast led the unfaltering feet
Of even thy meanest heroes down to death,
Lifted poor knights to many a great emprise,
Taught them high thoughts, and though they kept
their souls
Lowly as little children, bidden them lift
Eyes unappalled by all the myriad stars
That wheel around the great white throne of God.

BOOK I

NOW through the great doors of the Council-room
Magnificently streamed in rich array
The peers of England, regal of aspect
And grave. Their silence waited for the Queen:
And even now she came; and through their midst,
Low as they bowed, she passed without a smile
And took her royal seat. A bodeful hush
Of huge anticipation gripped all hearts,
Compressed all brows, and loaded the broad noon
With gathering thunder: none knew what the hour
Might yet bring forth; but the dark fire of war
Smouldered in every eye; for every day
The Council met debating how to join
Honour with peace, and every day new tales
Of English wrongs received from the red hands
Of that gigantic Empire, insolent
Spain, spurred fiercer resentments up like steeds
Revolting, on the curb, foaming for battle,

In all men's minds, against whatever odds.
On one side of the throne great Walsingham,
A lion of England, couchant, watchful, calm,
Was now the master of opinion: all
Drew to him. Even the hunchback Burleigh smiled
With half-ironic admiration now,
As in the presence of the Queen they met
Amid the sweeping splendours of her court,
A cynic smile that seemed to say, "I, too,
Would fain regain that forthright heart of fire;
Yet statesmanship is but a smoother name
For the superior cunning which ensures
Victory." And the Queen, too, knowing her strength
And weakness, though her woman's heart leaped out
To courage, yet with woman's craft preferred
The subtler strength of Burleigh; for she knew
Mary of Scotland waited for that war
To strike her in the side for Rome; she knew
How many thousands lurked in England still
Remembering Rome and bloody Mary's reign.

France o'er a wall of bleeding Huguenots
Watched for an hour to strike. Against all these
What shield could England raise—this little isle,
Outmatched, outnumbered, perilously near
Utter destruction?

So the long debate

Proceeded.

All at once there came a cry
Along the streets and at the palace gates
And at the great doors of the Council-room!
Then through the pikes and halberds a voice rose
Imperative for entrance, and the guards
Made way, and a strange whisper surged around,
And through the peers of England thrilled the blood
Of Agincourt as to the foot of the throne
Came Leicester, for behind him as he came
A seaman stumbled, travel-stained and torn,
Crying for justice, and gasped out his tale.
"The Spaniards," he moaned, "the Inquisition!
They have taken all my comrades, all our crew,
And flung them into dungeons: there they lie
Waiting for England, waiting for their Queen!

QUEEN ELIZABETH, 1585

From a Painting by Nicholas Hilliard

Will you not free them? I alone am left!
All London is afire with it, for this
Was one of your chief city merchant's ships—
The *Pride of London,* one of Osborne's ships!
But there is none to help them! I escaped
With shrieks of torment ringing in these ears,
The glare of torture-chambers in these eyes
That see no faces anywhere but blind,
Blind faces, each a bruise of white that smiles
In idiot agony, washed with sweat and blood,
The face of some strange thing that once was man,
And now can only turn from side to side
Babbling like a child, with mouth agape,
And crying for help where there is none to hear
Save those black vizards in the furnace-glow,
Moving like devils at their hellish trade. . . ."
He paused; his memory sickened, his brain swooned
Back into that wild glare of obscene pain!
Once more to his ears and nostrils horribly crept
The hiss and smell of shrivelling human flesh!
His dumb stare told the rest: his head sank down;
He bowed; he fell; he strove in agony

With what all hideous words must leave untold;
While Leicester vouched him, "This man's tale
is true!"
But like a gathering storm a windy moan
Of passion, like a tiger's, slowly crept
From the grey lips of Walsingham. "My Queen,
Will you not free them?"
Then Elizabeth,
Whose name is one for ever with the name
Of England, rose; and in her face the gleam
Of justice that makes anger terrible
Shone, and she stretched her glittering sceptre
forth
And spoke, with distant empires in her eyes:

"My lords, this is the last cry they shall wring
From English lips unheeded: we will have
Such remedies for this as all the world
Shall tremble at!"
And, on that night, while Drake
Close in his London lodging lay concealed
Until he knew if it were peace or war
With Spain (for he had struck on the high seas

At Spain; and well he knew if it were peace
His blood would be made witness to that bond,
And he must die a pirate's death or fly
Westward once more), there all alone, he pored
By a struggling rushlight o'er a well-thumbed chart
Of magic islands in the enchanted seas,
Dreaming, as boys and poets only dream
With those that see God's wonders in the deep,
Perilous visions of those palmy keys,
Cocoa-nut islands, parrot-haunted woods,
Crisp coral reefs and blue shark-finned lagoons
Fringed with the creaming foam, mile upon mile
Of mystery. Dream after dream went by,
Colouring the brown air of that London night
With many a mad miraculous romance.
There, suddenly, some augury, some flash
Showed him a coming promise, a strange hint,
Which, though he played with it, he scarce
believed;
Strange as in some dark cave the first fierce gleam
Of pirate gold to some forlorn maroon
Who tiptoes to the heap and glances round
Askance, and dreads to hear what erst he longed

To hear—some voice to break the hush; but bathes
Both hands with childish laughter in the gold,
And lets it trickle through his fevered palms,
And begins counting half a hundred times
And loses count each time for sheer delight
And wonder in it: meantime, if he knew,
Passing the cave-mouth, far away, beyond
The still lagoon, the coral reef, the foam
And the white fluttering chatter of the birds,
A sail that might have saved him comes and goes
Unseen across the blue Pacific sea.
So Drake, too, played with fancies; but that sail
Passed not unseen, for suddenly there came
A firm and heavy footstep to the door,
Then a loud knocking; and, at first, he thought
"I am a dead man: there is peace with Spain,
And they are come to lead me to my doom."
But, as he looked across one shoulder, pride
Checking the fuller watch for what he feared,
The door opened; and cold as from the sea
The night rushed in, and there against the gloom,
Clad, as it seemed, with wind and cloud and rain,
There loomed a stately form and high grim face

Loaded with deadly thoughts of iron war—
Walsingham. In one hand he held a map
Marked with red lines; the other hand held down
The rich encrusted hilt of his great sword.
Then Drake rose, and the other cautiously
Closing the door drew near the flickering light
And spread his map out on the table, saying—
"Mark for me here the points whereat the King
Philip of Spain may best be wounded, mark
The joints of his harness;" and Drake looked at
him
Thinking, "If he betray me, I am dead."
But the soldier met his eyes and, with a laugh,
Drake, quivering like a bloodhound in the leash,
Stooped, with his finger pointing thus and thus—
"Here would I guard, here would I lie in wait,
Here would I strike him through the breast and
throat."
And as he spoke he kindled, and began
To set forth his great dreams, and high romance
Rose like a moon reflecting the true sun
Unseen; and as the full round moon indeed
Rising behind a mighty mountain-chain

Will shadow forth in outline grim and black
Its vast and ragged edges, so that moon
Of high romance rose greatly shadowing forth
The grandeur of his dreams, until their might
Dawned upon Walsingham, and he, too, saw
For a moment of muffled moonlight and wild cloud
The vision of the imperious years to be!
But suddenly Drake paused as one who strays
Beyond the bounds of caution, paused and cursed
His tongue for prating like a moon-struck boy's.
"I am mad," he cried, "I am mad to babble so!"
Then Walsingham drew near him with strange eyes,
And muttered slowly, "Write that madness down;
Ay, write it down, that madman's plan of thine;
Sign it, and let me take it to the Queen."
But the weather-wiser seaman warily
Answered him, "If it please Almighty God
To take away our Queen Elizabeth,
Seeing that she is mortal as ourselves,
England might then be leagued with Spain, and I
Should here have sealed my doom. I will not put
My pen to paper."

SIR FRANCIS WALSINGHAM

From an Original Painting

So, across the charts,
With that dim light on each grim countenance
The seaman and the courtier subtly fenced
With words and thoughts, but neither would betray
His whole heart to the other. At the last
Walsingham gripped the hand of Francis Drake
And left him wondering.
On the third night came
A messenger from Walsingham, who bade
Drake to the Palace, where, without one word,
The statesman met him in an anteroom
And led him, with flushed cheek and beating heart,
Along a mighty gold-gloomed corridor
Into a high-arched chamber, hung with tall
Curtains of gold-fringed silk and tapestries
From Flanders looms, whereon were flowers and beasts
And forest-work, great knights, with hawk on hand,
Riding for ever on their glimmering steeds
Through bowery glades to some immortal face
Beyond the fairy fringes of the world.
A silver lamp swung softly overhead,

Fed with some perfumed oil that shed abroad
Delicious light and fragrances as rare
As those that stirred faint wings at eventide
Through the King's House in Lebanon of old.
Into a quietness as of fallen bloom
Their feet sank in that chamber; and, all round,
Soft hills of Moorish cushions dimly drowsed
On glimmering crimson couches. Near the lamp
An ebony chess-board stood inlaid with squares
Of ruby and emerald, garnished with cinque-foils
Of silver, bears and ragged staves: the men,
Likewise of precious stones, were all arrayed—
Bishops and knights and elephants and pawns—
As for a game. Sixteen of them were set
In silver white, the other sixteen gilt.
Now, as Drake gazed upon an arras, nigh
The farther doors, whereon was richly wrought
The picture of that grave and lovely queen
Penelope, with cold hands weaving still
The unending web, while in an outer court
The broad-limbed wooers basking in the sun
On purple fleeces took from white-armed girls,
Up-kirtled to the knee, the crimson wine;

There, as he gazed and thought, "Is this not like
Our Queen Elizabeth, who waits and weaves,
Penelope of England, her dark web
Unendingly till England's Empire come?"
There, as he gazed, for a moment, he could vow
The pictured arras moved. Well had it been
Had he drawn sword and pierced it through and
through;
But he suspected nothing and said nought
To Walsingham; for thereupon they heard
The sound of a low lute and a sweet voice
Carolling like a gold-caged nightingale,
Caught by the fowlers ere he found his mate,
And singing all his heart out evermore
To the unknown forest-love he ne'er should see.
And Walsingham smiled sadly to himself,
Knowing the weary queen had bidden some maid
Sing to her, even as David sang to Saul;
Since all her heart was bitter with her love
Or so it was breathed (and there the chess-board
stood,
Her love's device upon it), though she still,
For England's sake, must keep great foreign kings

Her suitors, wedding no man till she died.
Nor did she know how, in her happiest hour
Remembered now most sorrowfully, the moon,
Vicegerent of the sky, through summer dews,
As that sweet ballad tells in plaintive rhyme,
Silvering the grey old Cumnor towers and all
The hollow haunted oaks that grew thereby,
Gleamed on a casement whence the pure white face
Of Amy Robsart, wife of Leicester, wife
Unknown of the Queen's lover, a frail bar
To that proud Earl's ambition, quietly gazed
And heard the night-owl hoot a dark presage
Of murder through her timid, shuddering heart.
But of that deed Elizabeth knew nought;
Nay, white as Amy Robsart in her dream
Of love she listened to the sobbing lute,
Bitterly happy, proudly desolate;
So heavy are all earth's crowns and sharp with thorns!
But tenderly that high-born maiden sang:

Song

Now the purple night is past,
Now the moon more faintly glows,
Dawn has through thy casement cast
Roses on thy breast, a rose;
Now the kisses are all done,
Now the world awakes anew,
Now the charmèd hour is gone,
Let not love go, too.

When old winter, creeping nigh,
Sprinkles raven hair with white,
Dims the brightly glancing eye,
Laughs away the dancing light,
Roses may forget their sun,
Lilies may forget their dew,
Beauties perish, one by one,
Let not love go, too.

Palaces and towers of pride
Crumble year by year away;
Creeds like robes are laid aside,
Even our very tombs decay!

When the all-conquering moth and rust
Gnaw the goodly garment through,
When the dust returns to dust,
Let not love go, too.

Kingdoms melt away like snow,
Gods are spent like wasting flames,
Hardly the new peoples know
Their divine thrice-worshipped names!
At the last great hour of all,
When Thou makest all things new,
Father, hear Thy children call,
Let not love go, too.

The song ceased: all was still; and now it seemed
Power brooded on the silence, and Drake saw
A woman come to meet him,—tall and pale
And proud she seemed: behind her head two wings
As of some mighty phantom butterfly
Glimmered with jewel-sparks in the gold gloom.
Her small, pure, grey-eyed face above her ruff
Was chiselled like an agate; and he knew
It was the Queen. Low bent he o'er her hand;
And "Ah," she said, "Sir Francis Walsingham

Hath told me what an English heart beats here!
Know you what injuries the King of Spain
Hath done us?" Drake looked up at her: she
smiled,
"We find you apt! Will you not be our knight?
For we are helpless"—witchingly she smiled—
"We are not ripe for war; our policy
Must still be to uphold the velvet cloak
Of peace; but I would have it mask the hand
That holds the dagger! Will you not unfold
Your scheme to us?" And then with a low bow
Walsingham, at a signal from the Queen,
Withdrew; and she looked down at Drake and
smiled;
And in his great simplicity the man
Spake all his heart out like some youthful knight
Before his Gloriana: his heart burned,
Knowing he talked with England, face to face;
And suddenly the Queen bent down to him,
England bent down to him, and his heart reeled
With the beauty of her presence—for indeed
Women alone have royal power like this
Within their very selves enthroned and shrined

To draw men's hearts out! Royal she bent down
And touched his hand for a moment. "Friend,"
she said,
Looking into his face with subtle eyes,
"I have searched thy soul to-night and know full
well
How I can trust thee! Canst thou think that I,
The daughter of my royal father, lack
The fire which every boor in England feels
Burning within him as the bloody score
Which Spain writes on the flesh of Englishmen
Mounts higher day by day? Am I not Tudor?
I am not deaf or blind; nor yet a king!
I am a woman and a queen, and where
Kings would have plunged into their red revenge
Or set their throne up on this temporal shore,
As flatterers bade that wiser king Canúte,
Thence to command the advancing tides of battle
Till one ensanguined sea whelm throne and king
And kingdom; friend, I take my woman's way,
Smile in mine enemies' faces with a heart
All hell, and undermine them hour by hour!
This island scarce can fend herself from France,

And now Spain holds the keys of all the world:
How should we fight her, save that my poor wit
Hath won the key to Philip? Oh, I know
His treacherous, lecherous heart, and hour by hour
My nets are drawing round him. I, that starve
My public armies, feed his private foes,
Nourish his rebels in the Netherlands,
Nay, sacrifice mine own poor woman's heart
To keep him mine—there is no sacrifice
On earth like this—and surely now stands Fate
With hand uplifted by the doors of Spain
Ready to knock: the time is close at hand
When I shall strike, once, and no second stroke.
Remember, friend, though kings have fought for her,
This England, with the trident in her grasp,
Was ever woman; and she waits her throne;
And thou canst speed it. Furnish thee with ships,
Gather thy gentleman adventurers,
And be assured thy parsimonious queen—
Oh, ay, she knows that chattering of the world—
Will find thee wealth enough. Then put to sea,
Fly the black flag of piracy awhile

Against these blackest foes of all mankind.
Nay; what hast thou to do with piracy?
Hostis humani generis indeed
Is Spain: she dwells beyond the bounds of law;
Thine is no piracy, whate'er men say,
Thou art a knight on Gloriana's quest.
Oh, lay that golden unction to thy soul,
This is no piracy, but glorious war,
Waged for thy country and for all mankind;
Therefore put out to sea without one fear,
Ransack their El Dorados of the West,
Pillage their golden galleons, sap their strength
Even at its utmost fountains: let them know
That there is blood, not water, in our veins.
Carry thy scheme out to the glorious end,
And, though at first thou needs must ride alone
And unsupported, ere that end is reached,
When I shall give the word, nay, but one word,
All England shall be up and after thee:
The sword of England shall shine over thee,
And round about thee like a guardian fire;
All the great soul of England shall be there;
Her mighty dead shall at that cry of doom

Rise from their graves, and in God's panoply
Plunge with out standards through immortal storms
When Drake rides out across the wreck of Rome.
As yet we must be cautious; let no breath
Escape thee, save to thy most trusted friends;
For now, if my lord Burleigh heard one word
Of all thou hast in mind, he is so much
The friend of caution and the beaten road
He would not rest till he had wrecked thy hopes
And sealed thy doom! Go now, fit out thy ships.
Walsingham is empowered to give thee gold
Immediately, but look to him for more

As thou shalt need it, gold and gold to spare,
My golden-hearted pilot to the shores
Of Empire—so farewell;" and through the gloom
She vanished as she came; and Drake groped, dazed,
Out through the doors, and found great Walsingham
Awaiting him with gold.

But in the room

Where Drake had held his converse with the Queen
The embroidered arras moved, and a lean face,
White with its long eavesdropping upon death,
Crept out and peered as a venomous adder peers
From out dark ferns, then as the reptile flashes
Along a path between two banks of flowers
Almost too swift for sight, a stealthy form—
One of the fifty spies whom Burleigh paid—
Passed down the gold-gloomed corridor to seek
His master, whom among great books he found,
Calm, like a mountain brooding o'er the sea.
Nor did he break that calm for all these winds
Of rumour that now burst from out the sky.
His brow bent like a cliff over his thoughts,
And the spy watched him half resentfully,
Thinking his news well worth a blacker frown.
At last the statesman smiled and answered, "Go;
Fetch Thomas Doughty, Leicester's secretary."

Few suns had risen and set ere Francis Drake
Had furnished forth his ships with guns and men,
Tried seamen that he knew in storms of old,—

Will Harvest, who could haul the ropes and fight
All day, and sing a foc'sle song to cheer
Sea-weary hearts at night; brave old Tom Moone
The carpenter, whose faithful soul looked up
To Drake's large mastery with a mastiff's eyes;
And three-score trusty mariners, all scarred
And weather-beaten. After these there came
Some two-score gentleman adventurers,
Gay college lads or lawyers that had grown
Sick of the dusty Temple, and were fired
With tales of the rich Indies and those tall
Enchanted galleons drifting through the West,
Laden with ingots and broad bars of gold.
Already some had bought at a great price
Green birds of Guatemala, which they wore
On their slouched hats, tasting the high romance
And new-found colours of the world like wine.
By night they gathered in a marvellous inn
Beside the black and secret flowing Thames;
And joyously they tossed the magic phrase
"Pieces of eight" from mouth to mouth, and laughed
And held the red wine up, night after night,

Around their tables, toasting Francis Drake.
Among these came a courtier, and none knew
Or asked by whose approval, for each thought
Some other brought him; yet he made his way
Cautiously, being a man with a smooth tongue,
The secretary of Leicester; and his name
Was Thomas Doughty. Most of all with Drake
He won his way to friendship, till at last
There seemed one heart between them and one soul.

BOOK II

SO on a misty grey December morn
Five ships put out from calm old Plymouth Sound;
Five little ships, the largest not so large
As many a coasting yacht or fishing-trawl
To-day; yet these must brave uncharted seas
Of unimagined terrors, haunted glooms,
And shadowy horrors of an unknown world
Wild as primæval chaos. In the first,
The *Golden Hynde,* a ship of eighteen guns,
Drake sailed: John Wynter, a queen's captain, next
Brought out the *Elizabeth,* a stout new ship
Of sixteen guns. The pinnace *Christopher*
Came next, in staunch command of old Tom Moone
Who, five years back, with reeking powder grimed,
Off Cartagena fought against the stars
All night, and, as the sun arose in blood,
Knee-deep in blood and brine, stood in the dark

Perilous hold and scuttled his own ship
The *Swan,* bidding her go down to God's great deep
Rather than yield her up a prize to Spain.
Lastly two gentleman-adventurers
Brought out the new *Swan* and the *Marygold.*

Their crews, all told, were eight score men and boys.
Not only terrors of the deep they braved,
Bodiless witchcrafts of the black abyss,
Red gaping mouths of hell and gulfs of fire
That yawned for all who passed the tropic line;
But death lurked round them from their setting forth.
Mendoza, plenipotentiary of Spain,
By spies informed, had swiftly warned his king,
Who sent out mandates through his huge empire
From Guadalchiber to the golden West
For the instant sinking of all English ships
And the instant execution of their crews
Who durst appear in the Caribbean Sea.
Moreover, in the pith of their emprise

A peril lurked—Burleigh's emissaries,
The smooth-tongued Thomas Doughty, who had
brought
His brother—unacquitted of that charge
Of poisoning, raised against him by the friends
Of Essex, but in luckless time released
Lately for lack of proof, on no strong plea.
These two wound through them like two snakes at
ease
In Eden, waiting for their venomous hour.
Especially did Thomas Doughty toil
With soft and flowery tongue to win his way;
And Drake, whose rich imagination craved
For something more than simple seaman's talk,
Was marvellously drawn to this new friend,
Who with the scholar's mind, the courtier's gloss,
The lawyer's wit, the adventurer's romance,
Gold honey from the blooms of Euphues,
Rare flashes from the *Mermaid* and sweet smiles
Copied from Sidney's self, even to the glance
Of sudden, liquid sympathy, gave Drake
That banquet of the soul he ne'er had known
Nor needed till he knew, but needed now.

So to the light of Doughty's answering eyes
He poured his inmost thoughts out, hour by hour;
And Doughty coiled up in the heart of Drake.

Against such odds the tiny fleet set sail;
Yet gallantly and with heroic pride,
Escutcheoned pavisades, emblazoned poops,
Banners and painted shields and close-fights hung
With scarlet broideries. Every polished gun
Grinned through the jaws of some heraldic beast,
Gilded and carven and gleaming with all hues;
While in the cabin of the *Golden Hynde*
Rich perfumes floated, given by the great Queen
Herself to Drake as Captain-General;
So that it seemed her soul was with the fleet,
A presence to remind him, far away,
Of how he talked with England face to face,—
No pirate he, but Gloriana's knight.
Silver and gold his table furniture,
Engraved and richly chased, lavishly gleamed
While, fanned by favouring airs, the ships advanced
With streaming flags and ensigns and sweet chords

Of music struck by skilled musicians
Whom Drake brought with him, not from vanity,
But knowing how the pulse of men beats high
To music; and the hearts of men like these
Were open to the high romance of earth,
And they that dwelt so near God's mystery
Were proud of their own manhood. They went out
To danger as to a sweetheart far away,
Who even now was drawing the western clouds
Like a cymar of silk and snow-white furs
Close to her, till her body's beauty seemed
Clad in a mist of kisses. They desired
Her glittering petulance and her sulky sweet
Red pouts of anger. They went out to her
With pomp and ceremony, richly attired
And girt about with honour as befit
Souls that might talk with angels by the way.

Light as the sea-birds dipping their white wings
In foam before the gently heaving prows
Each heart beat, while the low soft lapping splash
Of water racing past them ripped and tore

Whiter and faster, and the bellying sails
Filled out, and the white cliffs of England sank
Dwindling behind the broad grey plains of sea.
Meekly content and tamely stay-at-home
The sea-birds seemed that piped across the waves;
And Drake, be-mused, leaned smiling to his friend
Doughty and said, "Is it not strange to know
When we return yon speckled herring-gulls
Will still be wheeling, dipping, flashing there
Just as we leave them? Ah, my heart cries out
We shall not find a sweeter land afar
Than those thyme-scented hills we leave behind!
Soon the young lambs will bleat across the combes,
And breezes will bring puffs of hawthorn scent
Down Devon lanes; over the purple moors
Lavrocks will carol and the plover cry,
The nesting peewit cry; on village greens
Around the May-pole, while the moon hangs low,
The boys and girls of England merrily swing
In country footing through the flowery dance;
Roses return: I blame them not who stay,
I blame them not at all who cling to home.
For many of us indeed shall not return,

Nor ever know that sweetness any more.
But when our English clover once again
Reddens round valleys thick with waving gold,
Many beyond the faintest flush of dawn
Shall sleep for ever in the cold green sea:
'Tis only we poor wandering prodigals
That know the worth and wealth of heaven and home.
Bear with my weakness, for my heart is full
Of yonder England, our sweet Ida mount,
Mother of all our hopes and dreams and prayers,
Nor do I think a man needs be ashamed
Whose eyes grow wet to leave his native land;
For there is nought a man should hold more dear
Than his own country and his father's home."
Then the other with a laugh, "Nay, like the man
Who slept a hundred years we shall return
And find our England strange: there are great storms
Brewing; God only knows what we shall find—
Perchance a Spanish king upon the throne!
What then?" And Drake, "I should put down my helm,

And out once more to the unknown golden West
To die, as I have lived, an Englishman."
So said he, while the white cliffs dwindled down,
Faded, and vanished; but the prosperous wind
Carried the five ships onward over the swell
Of swinging, sweeping seas, till the sun sank,
And height o'er height the chaos of the skies
Broke out into the miracle of the stars.
Frostily glittering, all the Milky Way
Lay bare like diamond-dust upon the robe
Of some great king. Orion and the Plough
Glimmered through drifting gulfs of silver fleece,
And, far away, in Italy, that night
Young Galileo, looking upward, heard
The self-same whisper through that wild abyss
Which now called Drake out to the unknown West.
But, after supper, Drake came up on deck
With Doughty, and on the cold poop as they leaned
And gazed across the rolling gleam and gloom
Of mighty muffled seas, began to give
Voice to those lovely captives of the brain
Which, like princesses in some forest-tower,

Still yearn for the delivering prince, the sweet
Far bugle-note that calls from answering minds.
He told him how, in those dark days which now
Seemed like an evil dream, when the Princess
Elizabeth even trembled for her life
And read there, by the gleam of Smithfield fires,
Those cunning lessons of diplomacy
Which saved her then and now for England's sake,
He passed his youth. 'Twas when the power of
Rome
Began to light the gloom with that great glare
Of martyrdom which, while the stars endure,
Bears witness how men overcame the world,
Trod the red flames beneath their feet like
flowers—
Yea, cast aside the blackening robe of flesh,
While with a crown of joy upon their heads,
Even as into a palace, they passed through
The portals of the tomb to prove their love
Stronger at least than death: and, in those days
A Puritan, with iron in his soul,
Having in earlier manhood occupied
His business in great waters and beheld

The bloody cowls of the Inquisition pass
Before the midnight moon as he kept watch;
And having then forsworn the steely sea
To dwell at home in England with his love
At Tavistock in Devon, Edmund Drake
Began, albeit too near the Abbey walls,
To speak too staunchly for his ancient faith;
And with his young child Francis, had to flee
By night at last for shelter to the coast.
Little the boy remembered of that flight,
Pillioned behind his father, save the clang
And clatter of the hoofs on stony ground
Striking a sharp blue fire, while country tales
Of highwaymen kindled his reckless heart
As the great steed went shouldering through the night.
There Francis, laying a little sunburnt hand
On the big holstered pistol at each side,
Dreamed with his wide grey eyes that he himself
Was riding out on some freebooting quest,
And felt himself heroic. League by league
The magic world rolled past him as they rode,
Leaving him nothing but a memory

Of his own making. Vaguely he perceived
A thousand meadows darkly streaming by
With clouds of perfume from their secret flowers,
A wayside cottage-window pointing out
A golden finger o'er the purple road;
A puff of garden roses or a waft
Of honeysuckle blown along a wood,
While overhead that silver ship, the moon,
Sailed slowly down the gulfs of glittering stars,
Till, at the last, a buffet of fresh wind
Fierce with sharp savours of the stinging brine
Against his dreaming face brought up a roar
Of mystic welcome from the Channel seas.
And there Drake paused for a moment, as a song
Stole o'er the waters from the *Marygold,*
Where some musician, striking luscious chords
Of sweet-stringed music, freed his heart's desire
In symbols of the moment, which the rest,
And Doughty among them, scarce could
understand.

Song

The moon is up: the stars are bright:
The wind is fresh and free!
We're out to seek for gold to-night
Across the silver sea!
The world was growing grey and old:
Break out the sails again!
We're out to seek a Realm of Gold
Beyond the Spanish Main.

We're sick of all the cringing knees,
The courtly smiles and lies!
God, let Thy singing Channel breeze
Lighten our hearts and eyes!
Let love no more be bought and sold
For earthly loss or gain:
We're out to seek an Age of Gold
Beyond the Spanish Main.

Beyond the light of far Cathay,
Beyond all mortal dreams,
Beyond the reach of night and day
Our Eldorado gleams,

Revealing—as the skies unfold—
A star without a stain,
The Glory of the Gates of Gold
Beyond the Spanish Main.

And, as the skilled musician made the words
Of momentary meaning still imply
His own eternal hope and heart's desire,
Without belief, perchance, in Drake's own quest—
To Drake's own greater mind the eternal glory
Seemed to transfigure his immediate hope.
But Doughty only heard a sweet concourse
Of sounds: they ceased, and Drake resumed his tale
Of that strange flight in boyhood to the sea.
Next, the red-curtained inn and kindly hands
Of Protestant Plymouth held his memory long;
Often in strange and distant dreams he saw
That scene which now he tenderly pourtrayed
To Doughty's half-ironic smiling lips,
Half-sympathetic eyes; he saw again
That small inn parlour with homely fare
Set forth upon the table, saw the gang

Of seamen reeking from the spray come in,
Like great new thoughts to some adventurous brain.
Feeding his wide grey eyes he saw them stand
Around the crimson fire and stamp their feet
And scatter the salt drops from their big sea-boots;
And all that night he lay awake and heard
Mysterious thunderings of eternal tides
Moaning out of a cold and houseless gloom
Beyond the world, that made it seem most sweet
To slumber in a little four-walled inn
Immune from all that vastness. But at dawn
He woke, he leapt from bed, he ran and lookt,
There, through the tiny high bright casement, there,—
Oh, fairy vision of that small boy's face
Peeping at daybreak through the diamond pane!—
There first he saw the wondrous new-born world,
And round its princely shoulders wildly flowing,
Gemmed with a myriad clusters of the sun,
The magic azure mantle of the sea.
And, afterwards, there came those marvellous days
When, on that battleship, a disused hulk

Rotting to death in Chatham Reach, they found
Sanctuary and a dwelling-place at last.
For Hawkins, that great shipman, being their friend,
A Protestant, with power on Plymouth town,
Nigh half whereof he owned, made Edmund Drake
Reader of prayer to all the ships of war
That lay therein. So there the dreaming boy,
Francis, grew up in that grim nursery
Among the ropes and masts and great dumb mouths
Of idle ordnance. In that hulk he heard
Many a time his father and his friends
Over some wild-eyed troop of refugees
Thunder against the powers of Spain and Rome,
"Idolaters, who defiled the House of God
In England;" and all round them, as he heard,
The clang and clatter of shipwright hammers rang,
And hour by hour upon his vision rose,
In solid oak reality, new ships,
As Ilion rose to music, ships of war,

The visible shapes and symbols of his dream,
Unconscious yet, but growing as they grew,
A wondrous incarnation, hour by hour,
Till with their towering masts they stood complete,
Embodied thoughts, in God's own dockyards built,
For Drake ere long to lead against the world.
There, as to round the tale with ringing gold,
Across the waters from the full-plumed *Swan*
The music of a *Mermaid* roundelay—
Our Lady of the Sea, a Dorian theme
Tuned to the soul of England—charmed the moon.

Song

I

Queen Venus wandered away with a cry,—
N'oserez vous, mon bel ami?—
For the purple wound in Adon's thigh;
Je vous en prie, pity me;
With a bitter farewell from sky to sky,
And a moan—a moan from sea to sea;
N'oserez vous, mon bel, mon bel,
N'oserez vous, mon bel ami?

II

The soft Ægean heard her sigh,—
N'oserez vous, mon bel ami?—
Heard the Spartan hills reply,
Je vous en prie, pity me;
Spain was aware of her drawing nigh
Foot-gilt from the blossoms of Italy;
N'oserez vous, mon bel, mon bel,
N'oserez vous, mon bel ami?

III

In France they heard her voice go by,—
N'oserez vous, mon bel ami?—
And on the May-wind droop and die,
Je vous en prie, pity me;
Your maidens choose their loves, but I—
White as I came from the foam-white sea,
N'oserez vous, mon bel, mon bel,
N'oserez vous, mon bel ami?

IV

The warm red-meal-winged butterfly,—
N'oserez vous, mon bel ami?—

Beat on her breast in the golden rye,—
Je vous en prie, pity me,—
Stained her breast with a dusty dye
Red as the print of a kiss might be!
N'oserez vous, mon bel, mon bel,
N'oserez vous, mon bel ami?

V

Is there no land, afar or nigh,—
N'oserez vous, mon bel ami?—
But dreads the kiss o' the sea? Ah, why—
Je vous en prie, pity me!—
Why will ye cling to the loves that die?
Is earth all Adon to my plea?
N'oserez vous, mon bel, mon bel,
N'oserez vous, mon bel ami?

VI

Under the warm blue summer sky,—
N'oserez vous, mon bel ami?—
With outstretched arms and a low long sigh,—
Je vous en prie, pity me;—
Over the Channel they saw her fly

To the white-cliffed island that crowns the
sea,
N'oserez vous, mon bel, mon bel,
N'oserez vous, mon bel ami?

VII

England laughed as her Queen drew nigh,—
N'oserez vous, mon bel ami?—
To the white-walled cottages gleaming high,
Je vous en prie, pity me!
They drew her in with a joyful cry
To the hearth where she sits with a babe on
her knee,
She has turned her moan to a lullaby,
She is nursing a son to the kings of the sea,
N'oserez vous, mon bel, mon bel,
N'oserez vous, mon bel ami?

Such memories, on the plunging *Golden Hynde,*
Under the stars, Drake drew before his friend
Doughty; but touched most briefly on his great
Voyage to Darien, and the famous Tree,
And those wild exploits down to Rio Grande,

Which even now had made his fierce renown
Terrible to all lonely ships of Spain.
E'en now, indeed, that poet of Portugal,
Lope de Vega, filled with this new fear
Began to meditate his epic muse
Till, like a cry of panic from his lips,
He shrilled the faint *Dragontea* forth, wherein
Drake is that Dragon of the Apocalypse,
The dread Antagonist of God and Man.

Well had it been for Doughty on that night
Had he not heard what followed; for, indeed,
When two minds clash, not often does the less
Conquer the greater; but, without one thought
Of evil, seeing they now were safe at sea,
Drake told him, only somewhat, yet too much,
Of that close conference with the Queen.
And, lo!
The face of Doughty blanched with a slow thought
That crept like a cold worm through all his brain,
"Thus much I knew, though secretly, before;
But here he freely tells me as his friend;
If I am false and he is what they say,

His knowledge of my knowledge will mean death."
But Drake looked round at Doughty with a smile
And said, "Forgive me now: thou art not used
To these cold nights at sea! thou tremblest, friend;
Let us go down and drink a cup of sack
To our return!" And at that kindly smile
Doughty shook off his nightmare mood, and thought,
"I am no sea-dog, but a man of birth!
The yard-arm is for dogs, not gentlemen!
Even Drake would not misuse a man of birth!"
And in the cabin of the *Golden Hynde*
Revolving subtle treacheries he sat.
There with the sugared phrases of the court
And general sentiments which Drake believed
Were revelations of the man's own mind,
Bartering beads for gold, he drew out all
The simple Devon seaman's inmost heart,
And coiled up in the soul of Francis Drake.
There in the solemn night they interchanged
Lies for sweet confidences. From one wall
The picture of Drake's love looked down on him;
And, like a bashful schoolboy's, that bronzed face

Flushed as he blurted out with brightening eyes
And quickening breath how he had seen her first,
Crowned on the village green, a Queen of May.
Her name, too, was Elizabeth, he said,
As if it proved that she, too, was a queen,
Though crowned with milk-white Devon may
alone,
And queen but of one plot of meadow-sweet.
As yet, he said, he had only kissed her hand,
Smiled in her eyes and—there Drake also blanched,
Thinking, "I ne'er may see her face again,"
And Doughty comforted his own dark heart
Thinking, "I need not fear so soft a soul
As this"; and yet, he wondered how the man,
Seeing his love so gripped him, none the less
Could leave her, thus to follow after dreams;
For faith to Doughty was an unknown word,
And trustfulness the property of fools.
At length they parted, each to his own couch,
Doughty with half a chuckle, Francis Drake
With one old-fashioned richly grateful prayer
Blessing all those he loved, as he had learnt
Beside his mother's knee in Devon days.

So all night long they sailed; but when a rift
Of orchard crimson broke the yellowing gloom
And barred the closely clouded East with dawn,
Behold, a giant galleon overhead,
Lifting its huge black shining sides on high,
Loomed like some misty monster of the deep:
And, sullenly rolling out great gorgeous folds
Over her rumbled like a thunder-cloud
The heavy flag of Spain. The splendid poop,
Mistily lustrous as a dragon's hoard
Seen in some magic cave-mouth o'er the sea
Through shimmering April sunlight after rain,
Blazed to the morning; and her port-holes grinned
With row on row of cannon. There at once
One sharp shrill whistle sounded, and those five
Small ships, mere minnows clinging to the flanks
Of that Leviathan, unseen, unheard,
Undreamt of, grappled her. She seemed asleep,
Swinging at ease with great half-slackened sails,
Majestically careless of the dawn.
There in the very native seas of Spain,
There with the yeast and foam of her proud cliffs,
Her own blue coasts, in sight across the waves,

Up her Titanic sides without a sound
The naked-footed British seamen swarmed
With knives between their teeth: then on her decks
They dropped like panthers, and the softly fierce
Black-bearded watch of Spaniards, all amazed,
Rubbing their eyes as if at a wild dream,
Upraised a sudden shout, *El Draque! El Draque!*
And flashed their weapons out, but all too late;
For, ere their sleeping comrades reached the deck,
The little watch, outnumbered and outmatched,
Lay bound, and o'er the hatches everywhere
The points of naked cutlasses on guard
Gleamed, and without a struggle those below
Gave up their arms, their poignards jewelled thick
With rubies, and their blades of Spanish steel.

Then onward o'er the great grey gleaming sea
They swept with their rich booty, night and day.
Five other prizes, one for every ship,
Out of the seas of Spain they suddenly caught
And carried with them, laughing as they went—
"Now, now indeed the Rubicon is crossed;
Now have we singed the eyelids and the beard

Of Spain; now have we roused the hornet's nest;
Now shall we sail against a world in arms;
Now we have nought between us and black death
But our own hands, five ships, and three score guns."
So laughed they, plunging through the bay of storms,
Biscay, and past Gibraltar, not yet clothed
With British thunder, though, as one might dream,
Gazing in dim prophetic grandeur out
Across the waves while that small fleet went by,
Or watching them with love's most wistful fear
As they plunged Southward to the lonely coasts
Of Africa, till right in front up-soared,
Tremendous over ocean, Teneriffe,
Cloud-robed, but crowned with colours of the dawn.
Already those two traitors were at work,
Doughty and his false brother, among the crews,
Who knew not yet the vastness of their quest,
Nor dreamed of aught beyond the accustomed world;
For Drake had kept it secret, and the thoughts

Of some that he had shipped before the mast
Set sail scarce farther than for Mogadore
In West Morocco, or at the utmost mark
For northern Egypt, by the midnight woods
And crystal palace roofed with chrysoprase,
Where Prester John had reigned five hundred
years,
And Sydon, river of jewels, through the dark
Enchanted gorges rolled its rays along!
Some thought of Rio Grande; but scarce to ten
The true intent was known; while to divert
The rest from care the skilled musicians played.
But those two Doughtys cunningly devised
By chance-dropt words to breathe a hint abroad;
And through the foc'sles crept a grisly fear
Of things that lay beyond the bourne of earth,
Till even those hardy seamen almost quailed;
And now, at any moment, they might turn
With terror in their eyes. They might refuse
To sail into that fabled burning Void
Or brave that *primum mobile* which drew
O'er-daring ships into the jaws of hell
Beyond the Pole Antarticke, where the sea

Rushed down through fiery mountains, and no sail
Could e'er return against its roaring stream.
Now down the coast of Barbary they cruised
Till Christmas Eve embraced them in the heart
Of summer. In a bay of mellow calm
They moored, and as the fragrant twilight brought
The stars, the sound of song and dance arose;
And down the shores in stealthy silence crept,
Out of the massy forest's emerald gloom,
The naked, dark-limbed children of the night,
Unseen, to gaze upon the floating glare
Of revelry; unheard, to hear that strange
New music of the gods, where o'er the soft
Ripple and wash of the lanthorn-crimsoned tide
Will Harvest's voice above the chorus rang.

SONG

In Devonshire, now, the Christmas chime
Is carolling over the lea;
And the sexton shovels away the snow
From the old church porch, maybe;
And the waits with their lanthorns and noses
a-glow

Come round for their Christmas fee;
But, as in old England it's Christmas-time,
Why, so is it here at sea,
My lads,
Why, so is it here at sea!

When the ship comes home, from turret to poop
Filled full with Spanish gold,
There'll be many a country dance and joke,
And many a tale to be told;
Every old woman shall have a red cloak
To fend her against the cold;
And every old man shall have a big round stoup
Of jolly good ale and old,
My lads,
Jolly good ale and old!

But on the morrow came a prosperous wind
Whereof they took advantage, and shook out
The flashing sails, and held their Christmas feast
Upon the swirling ridges of the sea:
And, sweeping Southward with full many a rouse
And shout of laughter, at the fall of day,

While the black prows drove, leapt, and plunged, and ploughed
Through the broad dazzle of sunset-coloured tides,
Outside the cabin of the *Golden Hynde,*
Where Drake and his chief captains dined in state,
The skilled musicians made a great new song.

Song

I

Happy by the hearth sit the lasses and the lads, now,
Roasting of their chestnuts, toasting of their toes!
When the door is opened to a blithe new-comer,
Stamping like a ploughman to shuffle off the snows;
Rosy flower-like faces through the soft red fire-light
Float as if to greet us, far away at sea,
Sigh as they remember, and turn the sigh to laughter,

Kiss beneath the mistletoe and wonder at their glee.
With their "heigh ho, the holly!
This life is most jolly!"
Christmas-time is kissing-time;
Away with melancholy!

II

Ah, the Yule of England, the happy Yule of England,
Yule of berried holly and the merry mistletoe;
The boar's head, the brown ale, the blue snap-dragon,
Yule of groaning tables and the crimson log aglow!
Yule, the golden bugle to the scattered old companions,
Ringing as with laughter, shining as through tears!
Loved of little children, oh guard the holy Yule-tide,
Guard it, men of England, for the child beyond the years,

With its "heigh ho, the holly!"
Away with melancholy!
Christmas-time is kissing-time,
"This life is most jolly!"

Now to the Fortunate Islands of old time
They came, and found no glory as of old
Encircling them, no red ineffable calm
Of sunset round crowned faces pale with bliss
Like evening stars; but rugged, waste, and wild
Those isles were when they neared them, though afar
They beautifully smouldered in the sun
Like dusky purple jewels fringed and frayed
With silver foam across that ancient sea
Of wonder. On the largest of the seven
Drake landed Doughty with his musketeers
To exercise their weapons and to seek
Supplies among the matted uncouth huts
Which, as the ships drew round each ragged cliff,
Crept like remembered misery into sight;
Oh, like the strange dull waking from a dream
They blotted out the rosy courts and fair

Imagined marble thresholds of the King
Achilles and the heroes that were gone.
But Drake cared nought for these things. Such
a heart
He had, to make each utmost ancient bourne
Of man's imagination but a point
Of new departure for his Golden Dream.
But Doughty with his men ashore, alone,
Among the sparse wind-bitten groves of palm,
Kindled their fears of all they must endure
On that immense adventure. Nay, sometimes
He hinted of a voyage far beyond
All history and fable, far beyond
Even that Void whence only two returned,—
Columbus, with his men in mutiny;
Magellan, who could only hound his crew
Onward by threats of death, until they turned
In horror from the Threat that lay before,
Preferring to be hanged as mutineers
Rather than venture farther. Nor indeed
Did even Magellan at the last return;
But, with all hell around him, in the clutch
Of devils died upon some savage isle

By poisonous black enchantment. Not in vain
Were Doughty's words on that volcanic shore
Among the stunted dark acacia trees,
Whose heads, all bent one way by the trade-wind,
Pointed Northeast by North, Southwest by West,
Ambiguous sibyls that with wizened arms
Mysteriously declared a twofold path,
Homeward or onward. But aboard the ships,
Among the hardier seamen, old Tom Moone,
With one or two stout comrades, overbore
All doubts and questionings with blither tales
Of how they sailed to Darien and heard
Nightingales in November all night long
As down a coast like Paradise they cruised
Through seas of lasting summer, Eden isles,
Where birds like rainbows, butterflies like gems,
And flowers like coloured fires o'er fairy creeks
Floated and flashed beneath the shadowy palms;
While ever and anon a bark canoe
With naked Indian maidens flower-festooned
Put out from shadowy coves, laden with fruit
Ambrosial o'er the silken shimmering sea.
And once a troop of nut-brown maidens came—

So said Tom Moone, a twinkle in his eye—
Swimming to meet them through the warm blue waves
And wantoned through the water, like those nymphs
Which one green April at the Mermaid Inn
He heard Kit Marlowe mightily pourtray,
Among his boon companions, in a song
Of Love that swam the sparkling Hellespont
Upheld by nymphs, not lovelier than these,—
Though whiter yet not lovelier than these;
For those like flowers, but these like rounded fruit
Rosily ripening through the clear tides tossed
From nut-brown breast and arm all round the ship
The thousand-coloured spray. Shapely of limb
They were; but as they laid their small brown hands
Upon the ropes we cast them, Captain Drake
Suddenly thundered at them and bade them pack
For a troop of naughty wenches! At that tale
A tempest of fierce laughter rolled around
The foc'sle; but one boy from London town,
A pale-faced prentice, run-away to sea,

Asking why Drake had bidden them pack so soon,
Tom Moone turned to him with his deep-sea growl,
"Because our Captain is no pink-eyed boy
Nor soft-limbed Spaniard, but a staunch-souled Man,
Full-blooded; nerved like iron; with a girl
He loves at home in Devon; and a mind
For ever bent upon some mighty goal,
I know not what—but 'tis enough for me
To know my Captain knows." And then he told
How sometimes o'er the gorgeous forest gloom
Some marble city, rich, mysterious, white,
An ancient treasure-house of Aztec kings,
Or palace of forgotten Incas gleamed;
And in their dim rich lofty cellars gold,
Beyond all wildest dreams, great bars of gold,
Like pillars, tossed in mighty chaos, gold
And precious stones, agate and emerald,
Diamond, sapphire, ruby, and sardonyx.
So said he, as they waited the return
Of Doughty, resting in the foc'sle gloom,
Or idly couched about the sun-swept decks

On sails or coils of rope, while overhead
Some boy would climb the rigging and look out,
Arching his hand to see if Doughty came.
But when he came, he came with a strange face
Of feigned despair; and with a stammering tongue
He vowed he could not find those poor supplies
Which Drake himself in other days had found
Upon that self-same island. But, perchance,
This was a barren year, he said. And Drake
Looked at him, suddenly, and at the musketeers.
Their eyes were strained; their faces wore a cloud.
That night he said no more; but on the morn,
Mistrusting nothing, Drake with subtle sense
Of weather-wisdom, through that little fleet
Distributed his crews anew. And all
The prisoners and the prizes at those isles
They left behind them, taking what they would
From out their carven cabins,—glimmering silks,
Chiselled Toledo blades, and broad doubloons.
And, lo! as they weighed anchor, far away
Behind them on the blue horizon line
It seemed a city of towering masts arose;
And from the crow's nest of the *Golden Hynde*

A seaman cried, "By God; the hunt is up!"
And like a tide of triumph through their veins
The red rejoicing blood began to race
As there they saw the avenging ships of Spain,
Eight mighty galleons, nosing out their trail.
And Drake growled, "Oh, my lads of Bideford,
It cuts my heart to show the hounds our heels;
But we must not imperil our great quest!
Such fights as that must wait—as our reward
When we return. Yet I will not put on
One stitch of sail. So, lest they are not too slow
To catch us, clear the decks. God, I should like
To fight them!" So the little fleet advanced
With decks all cleared and shotted guns and men
Bare-armed beside them, hungering to be caught,
And quite distracted from their former doubts;
For danger, in that kind, they never feared.
But soon the heavy Spaniards dropped behind;
And not in vain had Thomas Doughty sown
The seeds of doubt; for many a brow grew black
With sullen-seeming care that erst was gay.
But happily and in good time there came,
Not from behind them now, but right in front,

On the first sun-down of their quest renewed,
Just as the sea grew dark around their ships,
A chance that loosed heart-gnawing doubt in deeds.
For through a mighty zone of golden haze
Blotting the purple of the gathering night
A galleon like a floating mountain moved
To meet them, clad with sunset and with dreams.
Her masts and spars immense in jewelled mist
Shimmered: her rigging, like an emerald web
Of golden spiders, tangled half the stars!
Embodied sunset, dragging the soft sky
O'er dazzled ocean, through the night she drew
Out of the unknown lands; and round a prow
That jutted like a moving promontory
Over a cloven wilderness of foam,
Upon a lofty blazoned scroll her name
San Salvador challenged obsequious isles
Where'er she rode; who kneeling like dark slaves
Before some great Sultan must lavish forth
From golden cornucopias, East and West,
Red streams of rubies, cataracts of pearl.
But, at a signal from their admiral, all

Those five small ships lay silent in the gloom
Which, just as if some god were on their side,
Covered them in the dark troughs of the waves,
Letting her pass to leeward. On she came,
Blazing with lights, a City of the Sea,
Belted with crowding towers and clouds of sail,
And round her bows a long-drawn thunder rolled
Splendid with foam; but ere she passed them by,
Drake gave the word, and with one crimson flash
Two hundred yards of black and hidden sea
Leaped into sight between them as the roar
Of twenty British cannon shattered the night.
Then after her they drove, like black sea-wolves
Behind some royal high-branched stag of ten,
Hanging upon those bleeding foam-flecked flanks,
Leaping, snarling, worrying, as they went
In full flight down the wind; for those light ships
Much speedier than their huge antagonist,
Keeping to windward, worked their will with her.
In vain she burnt wild lights and strove to scan
The darkening deep. Her musketeers in vain
Provoked the crackling night with random fires:
In vain her broadside bellowings burst at large,

As if the Gates of Erebus unrolled.
For ever and anon the deep-sea gloom
From some new quarter, like a dragon's mouth
Opened and belched forth crimson flames and tore
Her sides as if with iron claws unseen;
Till, all at once, rough voices close at hand
Out of the darkness thundered, "Grapple her!"
And, falling on their knees, the Spaniards knew
The Dragon of that red Apocalypse.
There with one awful cry, *El Draque! El Draque!*
They cast their weapons from them; for the moon
Rose, eastward, and against her rising black
Over the bloody bulwarks Francis Drake,
Grasping the great hilt of his naked sword,
Towered for a moment to their startled eyes
Through all the zenith like the King of Hell.
Then he leaped down upon their shining decks,
And after him swarmed and towered and leapt in haste
A brawny band of three score Englishmen,
Gigantic as they loomed against the sky
And risen, it seemed, by miracle from the sea.
So small were those five ships below the walls

Of that huge floating mountain. Royally
Drake, from the swart commander's trembling
hands
Took the surrendered sword, and bade his men
Gather the fallen weapons on an heap,
And placed a guard about them, while the moon
Silvering the rolling seas for many a mile
Glanced on the huddled Spaniards' rich attire,
As like one picture of despair they grouped
Under the splintered main-mast's creaking shrouds,
And the great swinging shadows of the sails
Mysteriously swept the gleaming decks;
Where many a butt of useless cannon gloomed
Along the accoutred bulwarks or upturned,
As the ship wallowed in the heaving deep,
Dumb mouths of empty menace to the stars.

Then Drake appointed Doughty, with a guard,
To sail the prize on to the next dim isle
Where they might leave her, taking aught they
would
From out her carven cabins and rich holds.
And Doughty's heart leaped in him as he thought,

"I have my chance at last"; but Drake, who still
Trusted the man, made surety doubly sure,
And in his wary weather-wisdom sent—
Even as a breathing type of friendship, sent—
His brother, Thomas Drake, aboard the prize;
But set his brother, his own flesh and blood,
Beneath the man, as if to say, "I give
My loyal friend dominion over me."
So courteously he dealt with him; but he,
Seeing his chance once more slipping away,
Raged inwardly and, from his own false heart
Imputing his own evil, he contrived
A cunning charge that night; and when they came
Next day, at noon, upon the destined isle,
He suddenly spat the secret venom forth,
With such fierce wrath in his defeated soul
That he himself almost believed the charge.
For when Drake stepped on the *San Salvador*
To order all things duly about the prize,
What booty they must keep and what let go,
Doughty received him with a blustering voice
Of red mock-righteous wrath, "Is this the way
Englishmen play the pirate, Francis Drake?

While thou wast dreaming of thy hero's crown—
God save the mark!—thy brother, nay, thy spy,
Must play the common pilferer, must convert
The cargo to his uses, rob us all
Of what we risked our necks to win: he wears
The ransom of an emperor round his throat
That might enrich us all. Who saw him wear
That chain of rubies ere last night?"

And Drake,
"Answer him, brother"; and his brother smiled
And answered, "Nay, I never wore this chain
Before last night; but Doughty knows, indeed,
For he was with me—and none else was there
But Doughty—'tis my word against his word,
That close on midnight we were summoned down
To an English seaman who lay dying below
Unknown to any of us, a prisoner
In chains, that had been captured none knew where,
For all his mind was far from Darien,
And wandering evermore through Devon lanes
At home; whom we released; and from his waist
He took this hidden chain and gave it me,
Begging me that if ever I returned

To Bideford in Devon I would go
With whatsoever wealth it might produce
To his old mother, who, with wrinkled hands
In some small white-washed cottage o'er the sea,
Where wall-flowers bloom in April, even now
Is turning pages of the well-worn Book
And praying for her son's return, nor knows
That he lies cold upon the heaving main.
But this he asked; and this in all good faith
I swore to do; and even now he died,
And hurrying hither from his side I clasped
His chain of rubies round my neck awhile,
In full sight of the sun. I have no more
To say." Then up spoke Hatton's trumpeter:
"But I have more to say. Last night I saw
Doughty, but not in full sight of the sun,
Nor once, nor twice, but three times at the least,
Carrying chains of gold, clusters of gems,
And whatsoever wealth he could convey
Into his cabin and smuggle in smallest space."
"Nay," Doughty stammered, mixing sneer and lie,
Yet bolstering up his courage with the thought
That being what courtiers called a gentleman

He ranked above the rude sea-discipline,
"Nay, they were free gifts from the Spanish crew
Because I treated them with courtesy."
Then bluff Will Harvest, "That perchance were
true,
For he hath been close closeted for hours
With their chief officers, drinking their health
In our own war-bought wine, while down below
Their captured English seaman groaned his last."
Then Drake, whose utter silence, with a sense
Of infinite power and justice, ruled their hearts,
Suddenly thundered—and the traitor blanched
And quailed before him. "This my flesh and
blood
I placed beneath thee as my dearer self!
But thou, in trampling on him, shalt not say
I charge thy brother. Nay, thou chargest me!
Against me only hast thou stirred this strife;
And now, by God, shalt thou learn, once for all,
That I, thy captain for this voyage, hold
The supreme power of judgment in my hands.
Get thee aboard my flagship! When I come
I shall have more to say to thee; but thou,

My brother, take this galleon in thy charge;
For, as I see, she holdeth all the stores
Which Doughty failed to find. She shall return
With us to that New World from which she came.
But now let these our prisoners all embark
In yonder pinnace; let them all go free.
I care not to be cumbered on my way
Through dead Magellan's unattempted dream
With chains and prisoners. In that Golden World
Which means much more to me than I can speak,
Much more, much more than I can speak or
breathe,
Being, behind whatever name it bears—
Earthly Paradise, Island of the Saints,
Cathay, or Zipangu, or Hy Brasil—
The eternal symbol of my soul's desire,
A sacred country shining on the sea,
That Vision without which, the wise king said,
A people perishes; in that place of hope,
That Tirn'an Og, that land of lasting youth,
Where whosoever sails with me shall drink
Fountains of immortality and dwell
Beyond the fear of death for evermore,

There shall we see the dust of battle dance
Everywhere in the sunbeam of God's peace!
Oh, in the new Atlantis of my soul
There are no captives: there the wind blows free;
And, as in sleep, I have heard the marching song
Of mighty peoples rising in the West,
Wonderful cities that shall set their foot
Upon the throat of all old tyrannies;
And on the West wind I have heard a cry,
The shoreless cry of the prophetic sea
Heralding through that golden wilderness
The Soul whose path our task is to make straight,
Freedom, the last great Saviour of mankind.
I know not what I know: these are wild words,
Which as the sun draws out earth's morning mists
Over dim fields where careless cattle sleep,
Some visionary Light, unknown, afar,
Draws from my darkling soul. Why should we
drag
Thither this Old-World weight of utter gloom,
Or with the ballast of these heavy hearts
Make sail in sorrow for Pacific Seas?
Let us leave chains and prisoners to Spain;

But set these free to make their own way home!"
So said he, groping blindly towards the truth,
And heavy with the treason of his friend.
His face was like a king's face as he spake,
For sorrows that strike deep reveal the deep;
And through the gateways of a raggèd wound
Sometimes a god will drive his chariot wheels
From some deep haven within the hearts of men.
Nevertheless, the immediate seamen there
Knowing how great a ransom they might ask
For some among their prisoners, men of wealth
And high degree, scarce liked to free them thus;
And only saw in Drake's conflicting moods
The moment's whim. "For little will he care,"
They muttered, "when we reach those fabled
shores,
Whether his cannon break their golden peace."
Yet to his face they murmured not at all;
Because his eyes compelled them like a law.
So there they freed the prisoners and set sail
Across the earth-shaking shoulders of the broad
Atlantic, and the great grey slumbrous waves
Triumphantly swelled up to meet the keels.

BOOK III

NOW in the cabin of the *Golden Hynde*
At dusk, Drake sent for Doughty. From one wall
The picture of his love looked down on him;
And on the table lay the magic chart,
Drawn on a buffalo horn, all small peaked isles,
Dwarf promontories, tiny twisted creeks,
And fairy harbours under elfin hills,
With marvellous inscriptions lined in red,—
As *Here is Gold,* or *Many Rubies Here,*
Or *Ware Witch-crafte,* or *Here is Cannibals.*
For in his great simplicity the man
Delighted in it, with the adventurous heart
Of boyhood poring o'er some well-thumbed tale
On blue Twelfth Night beside the crimson fire;
And o'er him, like the vision of a boy
In his first knighthood when, upon some hill
Washed by the silver fringes of the sea,

Amidst the purple heather he lies and reads
Of Arthur and Avilion, like a star
His love's pure face looked down. There Doughty came,
Half fearful, half defiant, with a crowd
Of jostling half-excuses on his lips,
And one dark swarm of adders in his heart.
For now what light of chivalry remained
In Doughty's mind was thickening with a plot,
Subtler and deadlier than the serpent's first
Attempt on our first sire in Eden bower.
Drake, with a countenance open as the sun,
Received him, saying: "Forgive me, friend, for I
Was hasty with thee. I wellnigh forgot
Those large and liberal nights we two have passed
In this old cabin, telling all our dreams
And hopes, in friendship, o'er and o'er again.
But Vicary, thy lawyer friend, hath been
Pleading with me; and now I understand
All; so forgive,—for thou art hasty too,
And hast said things in passion which, 'fore God,
I would not take from other men alive.
But now—I understand. Thou shalt no more

Be vexed with a divided mastership.
Indeed, I trust thee, Doughty; against all
Appearances I trust thee. Wilt thou not
Be friends with me? For now in ample proof
Thou shalt take charge of this my *Golden Hynde*
In all things, save of seamanship, which rests
With the ship's master under my command.
But I myself will sail upon the prize."
And with the word he gathered up the chart,
Took down his lady's picture with a smile,
Gripped Doughty's hand and left him, staring, sheer
Bewildered with that magnanimity
Of faith, throughout all shadows, in some light
Unseen behind the shadows. Thus did Drake
Give up his own fair cabin which he loved;
Being, it seemed, a little travelling home,
Fragrant with memories,—gave it, as he thought,
In recompense to one whom he had wronged.
For even as his mind must ever yearn
To shores beyond the sunset, even so
He yearned through all dark shadows to his friend,
And with his greater nature striving still

To comprehend the lesser, as the sky
Embraces our low earth, he would adduce
Justifications, thus: "These men of law
Are trained to plead for any and every cause,
To feign an indignation, or to prove
The worse is better and that black is white!
Small wonder that their passion goes astray:
Ah God, there is one prayer for all of us—
Enter not into judgment with Thy servant!"

Yet as his boat pulled tow'rd the Spanish prize
Leaving the *Golden Hynde,* far off he heard
A voice that chilled him, as the voice of Fate
Crying like some old Bellman through the world.

SONG

Yes; oh, yes; if any seek
Laughter flown or lost delight,
Glancing eye or rosy cheek,
Love shall claim his own to-night!
Say, hath any lost a friend?
Yes; oh, yes!
Let his distress
In my ditty find its end.

Yes; oh, yes; here all is found!
Kingly palaces await
Each its rightful owner, crowned
King and consecrate,
Under the wet and wintry ground!
Yes; oh, yes!
There sure redress
Lies where all is lost and found.

And Doughty, though Drake's deed of kindness flashed
A moment's kind contrition through his heart,
Immediately, with all his lawyer's wit,
True to the cause that hired him, laughed it by,
And straight began to weave the treacherous web
Of soft intrigue wherein he meant to snare
The passions of his comrades. Night and day,
As that small fleet drove onward o'er the deep,
Cleaving the sunset with their bright black prows
Or hunted by the red pursuing Dawn,
He stirred between the high-born gentlemen
(Whose white and jewelled hands, gallant in fight,
And hearts remembering Creçy and Poictiers,

Were of scant use in common seamanship),
Between these and the men whose rough tarred
arms
Were good at equal need in storm or war,
Yet took a poorer portion of the prize,
He stirred a subtle jealousy and fanned
A fire that swiftly grew almost to hate.
For when the seamen must take precedence
Of loiterers on the deck—through half a word,
Small, with intense device, like some fierce lens,
He magnified their rude and blustering mode;
Or urged some scented fop, whose idle brain
Busied itself with momentary whims,
To bid the master alter here a sail,
Or there a rope; and, if the man refused,
Doughty, at night, across the wine-cups, raved
Against the rising insolence of the mob;
And hinted Drake himself was half to blame,
In words that seemed to say, "I am his friend,
Or I should bid you think him all to blame."
So fierce indeed the strife became that once,
While Chester, Doughty's catspaw, played with
fire,

The grim ship-master growled between his teeth,
"Remember, sir, remember, ere too late,
Magellan's mutinous vice-admiral's end."
And Doughty heard, and with a boisterous laugh
Slapped the old sea-dog on the back and said,
"The gallows are for dogs, not gentlemen!"
Meanwhile his brother, sly John Doughty, sought
To fan the seamen's fear of the unknown world
With whispers and conjectures; and, at night,
He brought old books of Greek and Hebrew down
Into the foc'sle, claiming by their aid
A knowledge of Black Art, and power to tell
The future, which he dreadfully displayed
There in the flickering light of the oily lamp,
Bending above their huge and swarthy palms
And tracing them to many a grisly doom.

So many a night and day westward they plunged.
The half-moon ripened to its mellow round,
Dwindled again and ripened yet again.
And there was nought around them but the grey
Ruin and roar of huge Atlantic seas.
And only like a memory of the world

They left behind them rose the same great sun,
And daily rolled his chariot through their sky,
Whereof the skilled musicians made a song.

Song

The same sun is o'er us,
The same Love shall find us,
The same and none other,
Wherever we be;
With the same goal before us,
The same home behind us,
England, our mother,
Ringed round with the sea.

When the breakers charged thundering
In thousands all round us
With a lightning of lances
Uphurtled on high,
When the stout ships were sundering
A rapture hath crowned us,
Like the wild light that dances
On the crests that flash by.

When the waters lay breathless
Gazing at Hesper
Guarding the golden
Fruit of the tree,
Heard we the deathless
Wonderful whisper
Wafting the olden
Dream of the sea.

No land in the ring of it
Now, all around us
Only the splendid
Resurging unknown!
How should we sing of it?—
This that hath found us
By the great sun attended
In splendour, alone.

Ah! the broad miles of it,
White with the onset
Of waves without number
Warring for glee.
Ah! the soft smiles of it

Down to the sunset,
Holy for slumber,
The peace of the sea.

The wave's heart, exalted,
Leaps forward to meet us,
The sun on the sea-wave
Lies white as the moon:
The soft sapphire-vaulted
Deep heaven smiles to greet us,
Free sons of the free-wave
All singing one tune.

The same sun is o'er us,
The same Love shall find us,
The same and none other,
Wherever we be;
With the same goal before us,
The same home behind us,
England, our mother,
Queen of the sea.

At last a faint-flushed April Dawn arose
With milk-white arms upbinding golden clouds

Of fragrant hair behind her lovely head;
And, lo! before the bright black plunging prows
The whole sea suddenly shattered into shoals
Of rolling porpoises. Everywhere they tore
The glittering water. Like a moving crowd
Of black bright rocks washed smooth by foaming tides,
They thrilled the unconscious fancy of the crews
With subtle, wild, and living hints of land.
And soon Columbus' happy signals came,
The signs that saved him when his mutineers
Despaired at last and clamoured to return,—
And there, with awe triumphant in their eyes,
They saw, lazily tossing on the tide,
A drift of seaweed and a berried branch,
Which silenced them as if they had seen a Hand
Writing with fiery letters on the deep.
Then a black cormorant, vulture of the sea,
With neck outstretched and one long ominous *honk,*
Went hurtling past them to its unknown bourne.
A mighty white-winged albatross came next;
Then flight on flight of clamorous clanging gulls;

And last, a wild and sudden shout of "Land!"
Echoed from crew to crew across the waves.
Then, dumb upon the rigging as they hung
Staring at it, a menace chilled their blood.
For like *Il Gran Nemico* of Dante, dark,
Ay, coloured like a thunder-cloud, from North
To South, in front, there slowly rose to sight
A country like a dragon fast asleep
Along the West, with wrinkled, purple wings
Ending in ragged forests o'er its spine;
And with great craggy claws out-thrust, that turned
(As the dim distances dissolved their veils)
To promontories bounding a huge bay.
There o'er the hushed and ever shallower tide
The staring ships drew nigh and thought, "Is this
The Dragon of our Golden Apple Tree,
The guardian of the fruit of our desire,
Which grows in gardens of the Hesperides,
Where those three sisters weave a white-armed dance
Around it everlastingly, and sing
Strange songs in a strange tongue that still convey
Warning to heedful souls?" Nearer they drew,

And now, indeed, from out a soft blue-grey
Mingling of colours on that coast's deep flank
There crept a garden of enchantment, height
O'er height, a garden sloping from the hills,
Wooded as with Aladdin's trees that bore
All-coloured clustering gems instead of fruit;
Now vaster as it grew upon their eyes,
And like some Roman amphitheatre
Cirque above mighty cirque all round the bay,
With jewels and flowers ablaze on women's breasts
Innumerably confounded and confused;
While lovely faces flushed with lust of blood,
Rank above rank upon their tawny thrones
In soft barbaric splendour lapped, and lulled
By the low thunderings of a thousand lions,
Luxuriously smiled as they bent down
Over the scarlet-splashed and steaming sands
To watch the white-limbed gladiators die.

Such fears and dreams for Francis Drake, at least,
Rose and dissolved in his nigh fevered brain
As they drew near that equatorial shore;
For rumours had been borne to him; and now

He knew not whether to impute the wrong
To his untrustful mind or to believe
Doughty a traitorous liar; for the sense
Of his own friendship towards him made it hard
To understand that treachery; yet there seemed
Proof and to spare. A thousand shadows rose
To mock him with their veiled indicative hands.
And each alone he laid and exorcised
With ease; but ah, not all, not all at once.
And for each doubt he banished, one returned
From darker depths to mock him o'er again.

So, in that bay, the little fleet sank sail
And anchored; and the wild reality
Behind those dreams towered round them on the hills,
Or so it seemed. And Drake bade lower a boat,
And went ashore with sixteen men to seek
Water; and, as they neared the embowered beach,
Over the green translucent tide there came,
A hundred yards from land, a drowsy sound
Immeasurably repeated and prolonged,
As of innumerable elfin drums

Dreamily mustering in the tropic bloom.
This from without they heard, across the waves;
But when they glided into a flowery creek
Under the sharp black shadows of the trees—
Jaca and Mango and Palm and red festoons
Of garlanded Liana wreaths—it ebbed
Into the murmur of the mighty fronds,
Prodigious leaves whose veinings bore the fresh
Impression of the finger-prints of God.
There humming-birds, like flakes of purple fire
Upon some passing seraph's plumage, beat
And quivered in blinding blots of golden light
Between the embattled cactus and cardoon;
While one huge whisper of primæval awe
Seemed to await the cool green eventide
When God should walk His Garden as of old.
Now as the boats were plying to and fro
Between the ships and that enchanted shore,
Drake bade his comrades tarry a little and went
Apart, alone, into the trackless woods.
Tormented with his thoughts, he saw all round
Once more the battling image of his mind,
Where there was nought of man, only the vast

Unending silent struggle of Titan trees,
Large internecine twistings of the world,
The hushed death-grapple and the still intense
Locked anguish of Laocoöns that gripped
Death by the throat for thrice three hundred years.
Once, like a subtle mockery overhead,
Some black-armed chattering ape swung swiftly by,
But he strode onward, thinking—"Was it false,
False all that kind outreaching of the hands?
False? Was there nothing certain, nothing sure
In those divinest aisles and towers of Time
Wherein we took sweet counsel? Is there nought
Sure but the solid dust beneath our feet?
Must all those lovelier fabrics of the soul,
Being so divinely bright and delicate,
Waver and shine no longer than some poor
Prismatic aery bubble? Ay, they burst,
And all their glory shrinks into one tear
No bitterer than some idle love-lorn maid
Sheds for her dead canary. God, it hurts,
This, this hurts most, to think how we must miss
What might have been, for nothing but a breath,
A babbling of the tongue, an argument,

Or such a poor contention as involves
The thrones and dominations of this earth,—
How many of us, like seed on barren ground,
Must miss the flower and harvest of their prayers,
The living light of friendship and the grasp
Which for its very meaning once implied
Eternities of utterance and the life
Immortal of two souls beyond the grave?"

Now, wandering upward ever, he reached and clomb
The slope side of a fern-fringed precipice,
And, at the summit, found an open glade,
Whence, looking o'er the forest, he beheld
The sea; and, in the land-locked bay below,
Far, far below, his elfin-tiny ships,
All six at anchor on the crawling tide!
Then onward, upward, through the woods once more
He plunged with bursting heart and burning brow;
And, once again, like madness, the black shapes
Of doubt swung through his brain and chattered and laughed,

Till he upstretched his arms in agony
And cursed the name of Doughty, cursed the day
They met, cursed his false face and courtier smiles;
"For oh," he cried, "how easy a thing it were
For truth to wear the garb of truth! This proves
His treachery!" And there, at once, his thoughts
Tore him another way, as thus, "And yet
If he were false, is he not subtle enough
To hide it? Why, this proves his innocence—
This very courtly carelessness which I,
Black-hearted evil-thinker as I am,
In my own clumsier spirit so misjudge!
These children of the court are butterflies
Fluttering hither and thither, and I—poor fool—
Would fix them to a stem and call them flowers,
Nay, bid them grasp the ground-like towering oaks
And shadow all the zenith;" and yet again
The madness of distrustful friendship gleamed
From his fierce eyes, "Oh, villain, damnèd villain,
God's murrain on his heart! I know full well
He hides what he can hide! He wears no fault
Upon the gloss and frippery of his breast!

It is not that! It is the hidden things,
Unseizable, the things I do not know:
Ay, it is these, these, these and these alone
That I mistrust."
And, as he walked, the skies
Grew full of threats, and now enormous clouds
Rose mammoth-like above the ensanguined deep,
Trampling the daylight out; and, with its death
Dyed purple, rushed along as if they meant
To obliterate the world. He took no heed.
Though that strange blackness brimmed the branching aisles
With horror, he strode on till in the gloom,
Just as his winding way came out once more
Over a precipice that o'erlooked the bay,
There, as he went, not gazing down, but up,
He saw what seemed a ponderous granite cliff,
A huge ribbed shell upon a lonely shore
Left by forgotten mountains when they sank
Back to earth's breast like billows on a sea.
A tall and whispering crowd of tree-ferns waved
Mysterious fringes round it. In their midst
He flung himself at its broad base, with one

Sharp shivering cry of pain, "Show me Thy ways,
O God, teach me Thy paths! I am in the dark!
Lighten my darkness!"

Almost as he spoke
There swept across the forest, far and wide,
Gathering power and volume as it came,
A sound as of a rushing mighty wind;
And, overhead, like great black gouts of blood
Wrung from the awful forehead of the Night
The first drops fell and ceased. Then, suddenly,
Out of the darkness, earth with all her seas,
Her little ships at anchor in the bay
(Five ebony ships upon a sheet of silver,
Drake saw not that, indeed, Drake saw not that!),
Her woods, her boughs, her leaves, her tiniest twigs,
Leapt like a hunted stag through one immense
Lightning of revelation into the murk
Of Erebus: then heaven o'er rending heaven
Shattered and crashed down ruin over the world.
But, in that deeper darkness, Francis Drake
Stood upright now, and with blind outstretched arms
Groped at that strange forgotten cliff and shell

Of mystery; for in that flash of light
Æons had passed; and now the Thing in front
Made his blood freeze with memories that lay
Behind his Memory. In the gloom he groped,
And with dark hands that knew not what they knew,
As one that shelters in the night, unknowing,
Beneath a stranded shipwreck, with a cry
He touched the enormous rain-washed belted ribs
And bones like battlements of some Mastodon
Embedded there until the trump of doom.

After long years, long centuries, perchance,
Triumphantly some other pioneer
Would stand where Drake now stood and read the tale
Of ages where he only felt the cold
Touch in the dark of some huge mystery;
Yet Drake might still be nearer to the light
Who now was whispering from his great deep heart,
"Show me Thy ways, O God, teach me Thy paths!"
And there by some strange instinct, oh, he felt

God's answer there, as if he grasped a hand
Across a gulf of twice ten thousand years;
And he regained his lost magnificence
Of faith in that great Harmony which resolves
Our discords, faith through all the ruthless laws
Of nature in their lovely pitilessness,
Faith in that Love which outwardly must wear,
Through all the sorrows of eternal change,
The splendour of the indifference of God.

All round him through the heavy purple gloom
Sloped the soft rush of silver-arrowed rain,
Loosening the skies' hard anguish as with tears.
Once more he felt his unity with all
The vast composure of the universe,
And drank deep at the fountains of that peace
Which comprehends the tumult of our days.
But with that peace the power to act returned;
And, with his back against the Mastodon,
He stared through the great darkness tow'rds the sea.
The rain ceased for a moment: only the slow
Drip of the dim droop-feathered palms all round

Deepened the hush.
Then, out of the gloom once more
The whole earth leapt to sight with all her woods,
Her boughs, her leaves, her tiniest twigs distinct
For one wild moment; but Drake only saw
The white flash of her seas, and there, oh there
That land-locked bay with those five elfin ships,
Five elfin ebony ships upon a sheet
Of wrinkled silver! Then, as the thunder followed,
One thought burst through his brain—
Where was the sixth?
Over the grim precipitous edge he hung,
An eagle waiting for the lightning now
To swoop upon his prey. One iron hand
Gripped a rough tree-root like a bunch of snakes;
And, as the rain rushed round him, far away
He saw to northward yet another flash,
A scribble of God's finger in the sky
Over a waste of white stampeding waves.
His eye flashed like a falchion as he saw it,
And from his lips there burst the sea-king's laugh;
For there, with a fierce joy he knew, he knew

Doughty, at last—an open mutineer!
An open foe to fight! Ay, there she went,—
His *Golden Hynde,* his little *Golden Hynde*
A wild deserter scudding to the North.
And, almost ere the lightning, Drake had gone
Crashing down the face of the precipice,
By a narrow water-gully, and through the huge
Forest he tore the straight and perilous way
Down to the shore; while, three miles to the North,
Upon the wet poop of the *Golden Hynde*
Doughty stood smiling. Scarce would he have smiled
Knowing that Drake had seen him from that tower
Amidst the thunders; but, indeed, he thought
He had escaped unseen admidst the storm.
Many a day he had worked upon the crew,
Fanning their fears and doubts until he won
The more part to his side. And when they reached
That coast, he showed them how Drake meant to sail
Southward, into the unknown Void; but he

Would have them suddenly slip by stealth away
Northward to Darien, showing them what a life
Of golden glory waited for them there,
If, laying aside this empty quest, they joined
The merry feasters round those island fires
Which over many a dark-blue creek illumed
Buccaneer camps in scarlet logwood groves,
Fringing the Gulf of Mexico, till dawn
Summoned the Black Flags out to sweep the sea.

But when Drake reached the flower-embowered
boat
And found the men awaiting his return
There, in a sheltering grove of bread-fruit trees
Beneath great eaves of leafage that obscured
Their sight, but kept the storm out, as they tossed
Pieces of eight or rattled the bone dice,
His voice went through them like a thunderbolt,
For none of them had seen the *Golden Hynde*
Steal from the bay; and now the billows burst
Like cannon down the coast; and they had thought
Their boat could not be launched until the storm
Abated. Under Drake's compelling eyes,

Nevertheless, they poled her down the creek
Without one word, waiting their chance.
Then all
Together with their brandished oars they thrust,
And on the fierce white out-draught of a wave
They shot up, up and over the toppling crest
Of the next, and plunged crashing into the vale
Behind it: then they settled at their thwarts,
And the fierce water boiled before their blades
As, with Drake's iron hand upon the helm,
They soared and crashed across the rolling seas.

Not for the Spanish prize did Drake now steer,
But for that little ship the *Marygold,*
Swiftest of sail, next to the *Golden Hynde,*
And, in the hands of Francis Drake, indeed
Swiftest of all; and ere the seamen knew
What power, as of a wind, bore them along,
Anchor was up, their hands were on the sheets,
The sails were broken out, the *Marygold*
Was flying like a storm-cloud to the North,
And on her poop an iron statue still
As death stood Francis Drake.

One hour they rushed
Northward, with green seas washing o'er the deck
And buffeted with splendour; then they saw
The *Golden Hynde* like some wing-broken gull
With torn mismanaged plumes beating the air
In peril of utter shipwreck; saw her fly
Half-mast, a feeble signal of distress
Despite all Doughty's curses; for her crew
With wild divisions torn amongst themselves
Most gladly now surrendered in their hearts,
As close alongside grandly onward swept
The *Marygold,* with canvas trim and taut
Magnificently drawing the full wind,
Her gunners waiting at their loaded guns
Bare-armed and silent; and that iron soul
Alone, upon her silent quarter-deck.
There they hauled up into the wind and lay
Rocking, while Drake, alone, without a guard,
Boarding the runaway, dismissed his boat
Back to the *Marygold.* Then his voice outrang
Trumpet-like o'er the trembling mutineers,
And clearly, as if they were but busied still
About the day's routine. They hid their shame,

As men that would propitiate a god,
By flying to fulfil his lightest word;
And ere they knew what power, as of a wind
Impelled them—that half wreck was trim and taut,
Her sails all drawing and her bows afoam;
And, creeping past the *Marygold* once more,
She led their Southward way! And not till then
Did Drake vouchsafe one word to the white face
Of Doughty, as he furtively slunk nigh
With some new lie upon his fear-parched lips
Thirsting for utterance in his crackling laugh
Of deprecation; and with one ruffling puff
Of pigeon courage in his blinded soul—
"I am no sea-dog—even Francis Drake
Would scarce misuse a gentleman. Thank God
I am a gentleman!" And there Drake turned
And summoned four swart seamen out by name.
His words went like a cold wind through their flesh
As with a passionless voice he slowly said,
"Take ye this fellow: bind him to the mast
Until what time I shall decide his fate."

And Doughty gasped as at the world's blank
end,—
"Nay, Francis," cried he, "wilt thou thus misuse
A gentleman?" But as the seamen gripped
His arms he struggled vainly and furiously
To throw them off; and in his impotence
Let slip the whole of his treacherous cause and
hope
In empty wrath,—"Fore God," he foamed and
snarled,
"Ye shall all smart for this when we return!
Unhand me, dogs! I have Lord Burleigh's power
Behind me. There is nothing I have done
Without his warrant! Ye shall smart for this!
Unhand me, I say, unhand me!"
And in one flash
Drake saw the truth, and Doughty saw his eyes
Lighten upon him; and his false heart quailed
Once more; and he suddenly suffered himself
Quietly, strangely, to be led away
And bound without a murmur to the mast.
And strangely Drake remembered, as those words,
"Ye shall all smart for this when we return,"

Yelped at his faith, how while the Dover cliffs
Faded from sight he leaned to his new friend
Doughty and said: "I blame them not who stay!
I blame them not at all who cling to home,
For many of us, indeed, shall not return,
Nor ever know that sweetness any more."

And when they had reached their anchorage anew,
Drake, having now resolved to bring his fleet
Beneath a more compact control, at once
Took all the men and the chief guns and stores
From out the Spanish prize; and sent Tom Moone
To set the hulk afire. Also he bade
Unbind the traitor and ordered him aboard
The pinnace *Christopher*. John Doughty, too,
He ordered thither, into the grim charge
Of old Tom Moone, thinking it best to keep
The poisonous leaven carefully apart
Until they had won well Southward, to a place
Where, finally committed to their quest,
They might arraign the traitor without fear
Or favour, and acquit him or condemn.
But those two brothers, doubting as the false

WILLIAM CECIL, LORD BURLEIGH

From the Original Painting by Mark Gerard

Are damned to doubt, saw murder in his eyes,
And thought "He means to sink the smack one night,"
And they refused to go, till Drake abruptly
Ordered them straightway to be slung on board
With ropes.
The daylight waned; but ere the sun
Sank, the five ships were plunging to the South;
For Drake would halt no longer, lest the crews
Also should halt betwixt two purposes.
He took the tide of fortune at the flood;
And onward through the now subsiding storm,
Ere they could think what power as of a wind
Impelled them, he had swept them on their way.
Far, far into the night they saw the blaze
That leapt in crimson o'er the abandoned hulk
Behind them, like a mighty hecatomb
Marking the path of some Titanic will.
Many a night and day they Southward drove.
Sometimes at midnight round them all the sea
Quivered with witches' oils and water-snakes,
Green, blue, and red, with lambent tongues of fire.
Mile upon mile about the blurred black hulls

A cauldron of tempestuous colour coiled.
On every mast mysterious meteors burned,
And from the shores a bellowing rose and fell
As of great bestial gods that walked all night
Through some wild hell unknown, too vast for men;
But when the silver and crimson of the dawn
Broke out, they saw the tropic shores anew,
The fair white foam, and, round about the rocks,
Weird troops of tusked sea-lions; and the world
Mixed with their dreams and made them stranger still.
And, once, so fierce a tempest scattered the fleet
That even the hardiest souls began to think
There was a Jonah with them; for the seas
Rose round them like green mountains, peaked and ridged
With heights of Alpine snow amongst the clouds;
And many a league to Southward, when the ships
Gathered again amidst the sinking waves
Four only met. The ship of Thomas Drake
Was missing; and some thought it had gone down
With all hands in the storm. But Francis Drake

Held on his way, learning from hour to hour
To merge himself in immortality;
Learning the secret of those pitiless laws
Which dwarf all mortal grief, all human pain,
To something less than nothing by the side
Of that eternal travail dimly guessed,
Since first he felt in the miraculous dark
The great bones of the Mastodon, that hulk
Of immemorial death. He learned to judge
The passing pageant of this outward world
As by the touch-stone of that memory;
Even as in that country which some said
Lay now not far, the great Tezcucan king,
Resting his jewelled hand upon a skull,
And on a smouldering glory of jewels throned
There in his temple of the Unknown God
Over the host of Aztec princes, clad
In golden hauberks gleaming under soft
Surcoats of green or scarlet feather-work,
Could in the presence of a mightier power
Than life or death give up his guilty sons,
His only sons, to the sacrificial sword.
And hour by hour the soul of Francis Drake,

Unconscious as an oak-tree of its growth,
Increased in strength and stature as he drew
Earth, heaven, and hell within him, more and more.
For as the dream we call our world, with all
Its hues is but a picture in the brain,
So did his soul enfold the universe
With gradual sense of superhuman power,
While every visible shape within the vast
Horizon seemed the symbol of some thought
Waiting for utterance. He had found indeed
God's own Nirvana, not of empty dream
But of intensest life! Nor did he think
Aught of all this; but, as the rustic deems
The colours that he carries in his brain
Are somehow all outside him while he peers
Unaltered through two windows in his face,
Drake only knew that as the four ships plunged
Southward, the world mysteriously grew
More like a prophet's vision, hour by hour,
Fraught with dark omens and significances,
A world of hieroglyphs and sacred signs
Wherein he seemed to read the truth that lay

Hid from the Roman augurs when of old
They told the future from the flight of birds.
How vivid with disaster seemed the flight
Of those blood-red flamingoes o'er the dim
Blue steaming forest, like two terrible thoughts
Flashing, unapprehended, through his brain!

And now, as they drove Southward, day and night,
Through storm and calm, the shores that fleeted by
Grew wilder, grander, with his growing soul,
And pregnant with the approaching mystery.
And now along the Patagonian coast
They cruised, and in the solemn midnight saw
Wildernesses of shaggy, barren marl,
Petrified seas of lava, league on league,
Craters and bouldered slopes and granite cliffs
With ragged rents, grim gorges, deep ravines,
And precipice on precipice up-piled
Innumerable to those dim distances
Where, over valleys hanging in the clouds,
Gigantic mountains and volcanic peaks
Catching the wefts of cirrhus fleece appeared
To smoke against the sky, though all was now

Dead as that frozen chaos of the moon,
Or some huge passion of a slaughtered soul
Prostrate under the marching of the stars.

At last, and in a silver dawn, they came
Suddenly on a broad-winged estuary,
And, in the midst of it, an island lay.
There they found shelter, on its leeward side,
And Drake convened upon the *Golden Hynde*
His dread court-martial. Two long hours he heard
Defence and accusation, then broke up
The conclave, and, with burning heart and brain,
Feverishly seeking everywhere some sign
To guide him, went ashore upon that isle,
And, lo! turning a rugged point of rock,
He rubbed his eyes to find out if he dreamed,
For there—a Crusoe's wonder, a miracle,
A sign—before him stood on that lone strand
Stark, with a stern arm pointing out his way
And jangling still one withered skeleton,
The grim black gallows where Magellan hanged
His mutineers. Its base was white with bones

Picked by the gulls, and crumbling o'er the sand
A dread sea-salt, dry from the tides of time.
There, on that lonely shore, Death's finger-post
Stood like some old forgotten truth made strange
By the long lapse of many memories,
All starting up in resurrection now
As at the trump of doom, heroic ghosts
Out of the cells and graves of his deep brain
Reproaching him. *"Were this man not thy friend,*
Ere now he should have died the traitor's death.
What wilt thou say to the others if they, too,
Prove false? Or wilt thou slay the lesser and save
The greater sinner? Nay, if thy right hand
Offend thee, cut it off!" And, in one flash,
Drake saw his path and chose it.

With a voice
Low as the passionless anguished voice of Fate
That comprehends all pain, but girds it round
With iron, lest some random cry break out
For man's misguidance, he drew all his men
Around him, saying, "Ye all know how I loved
Doughty, who hath betrayed me twice, and thrice,
For I still trusted him: he was no felon

That I should turn my heart away from him!
He is the type and image of man's laws;
While I—am lawless as the soul that still
Must sail and seek a world beyond the worlds,
A law behind earth's laws. I dare not judge!
But ye—who know the mighty goal we seek,
Who have seen him sap our courage, hour by hour,
Till God Himself almost appeared a dream
Behind his technicalities and doubts
Of aught he could not touch or handle; ye
Who have seen him stir up jealousy and strife
Between our seamen and our gentlemen,
Even as the world stirs up continual strife,
Bidding the man forget he is a man
With God's own patent of nobility;
Ye who have seen him strike this last sharp blow—
Sharper than any enemy hath struck,—
Ay, Jonathan, mine own familiar friend,
He whom I trusted, he alone could strike
So sharply, for indeed I loved this man.
Judge ye—for see, I cannot. Do not doubt
I loved this man!
But now, if ye will let him have his life,

Oh, speak! But, if ye think it must be death,
Hold up your hands in silence!" His voice
dropped,
And eagerly he whispered forth one word
Beyond the scope of Fate—"Yet, oh, my friends,
I would not have him die!" There was no sound
Save the long thunder of eternal seas,—
Drake bowed his head and prayed.
Then, suddenly,
One man upheld his hand; and, all at once,
A brawny forest of brown arms arose
In silence, and the great sea whispered *Death.*

. . . . . .

There, with one big swift impulse, Francis Drake
Held out his right sun-blackened hand and gripped
The hand that Doughty proffered him; and, lo!
Doughty laughed out and said, "Since I must die,
Let us have one more hour of comradeship,
One hour as old companions. Let us make
A feast here, on this island, ere I go
Where there is no more feasting." So they made
A great and solemn banquet as the day
Decreased; and Doughty bade them all unlock

Their sea-chests and bring out their rich array.
There, by that wondering ocean of the West,
In crimson doublets, lined and slashed with gold,
In broidered lace and double golden chains
Embossed with rubies and great cloudy pearls
They feasted, gentleman adventurers,
Drinking old malmsey, as the sun sank down.

Now Doughty, fronting the rich death of day,
And flourishing a silver pouncet-box
With many a courtly jest and rare conceit,
There as he sat in rich attire, outbraved
The rest. Though darker-hued, yet richer far,
His murrey-coloured doublet double-piled
Of Genoa velvet, puffed with ciprus, shone;
For over its grave hues the gems that bossed
His golden collar, wondrously relieved,
Blazed lustrous to the West like stars. But Drake
Wore simple black, with midnight silver slashed,
And, at his side, a great two-handed sword.
At last they rose, just as the sun's last rays
Rested upon the heaving molten gold
Immeasurable. The long slow sigh of the waves

That creamed across the lonely time-worn reef
All round the island seemed the very voice
Of the Everlasting: black against the sea
The gallows of Magellan stretched its arm
With that gaunt skeleton and its rusty chain
Creaking and swinging in the solemn breath
Of eventide like some strange pendulum
Measuring out the moments that remained.
There did they take the holy sacrament
Of Jesus' body and blood. Then Doughty and Drake
Kissed each other, as brothers, on the cheek;
And Doughty knelt; and Drake, without one word,
Leaning upon the two-edged naked sword
Stood at his side, with iron lips, and eyes
Full of the sunset; while the doomed man bowed
His head upon a rock. The great sun dropped
Suddenly, and the land and sea were dark;
And as it were a sign, Drake lifted up
The gleaming sword. It seemed to sweep the heavens
Down in its arc as he smote, once, and no more.

Then, for a moment, silence froze their veins,
Till one fierce seaman stooped with a hoarse cry;
And, like an eagle clutching up its prey,
His arm swooped down and bore the head aloft,
Gorily streaming, by the long dark hair;
And a great shout went up, "So perish all
Traitors to God and England!" Then Drake turned
And bade them to their ships; and, wondering,
They left him. As the boats thrust out from shore
Brave old Tom Moone looked back with faithful eyes
Like a great mastiff to his master's face.
He, looming larger from his loftier ground
Clad with the slowly gathering night of stars
And gazing seaward o'er his quiet dead,
Seemed like some Titan bronze in grandeur based
Unshakeable until the crash of doom
Shattered the black foundations of the world.

BOOK IV

DAWN, everlasting and almighty Dawn,
Hailed by ten thousand names of death and birth,
Who, chiefly by thy name of Sorrow, seem'st
To half the world a sunset, God's great Dawn,
Fair light of all earth's partings till we meet
Where Dawn and sunset, mingling East and West,
Shall make in some deep Orient of the soul
One radiant Rose of Love for evermore;
Teach me, oh teach to bear thy broadening light,
Thy deepening wonder, lest as old dreams fade
With love's unfaith, like wasted hours of youth
And dim illusions vanish in thy beam,
Their rapture and their anguish break that heart
Which loved them, and must love for ever now.
Let thy great sphere of splendour, ring by ring
For ever widening, draw new seas, new skies,
Within my ken; yet, as I still must bear
This love, help me to grow in spirit with thee.

Dawn on my song which trembles like a cloud
Pierced with thy beauty. Rise, shine, as of old
Across the wondering ocean in the sight
Of those world-wandering mariners, when earth
Rolled flat up to the Gates of Paradise,
And each slow mist that curled its gold away
From each new sea they furrowed into pearl
Might bring before their blinded mortal eyes
God and the Glory. Lighten as on the soul
Of him that all night long in torment dire,
Anguish and thirst unceasing for thy ray
Upon that lonely Patagonian shore
Had lain as on the bitterest coasts of Hell.
For all night long, mocked by the dreadful peace
Of world-wide seas that darkly heaved and sank
With cold recurrence, like the slow sad breath
Of a fallen Titan dying all alone
In lands beyond all human loneliness,
While far and wide glimmers that broken targe
Hurled from tremendous battle with the gods,
And, as he breathes in pain, the chain-mail rings
Round his broad breast a muffled rattling make
For many a league, so seemed the sound of waves

Upon those beaches—there, be-mocked all night,
Beneath Magellan's gallows, Drake had watched
Beside his dead; and over him the stars
Paled as the silver chariot of the moon
Drove, and her white steeds ramped in a fury of foam
On splendid peaks of cloud. The *Golden Hynde*
Slept with those other shadows on the bay.
Between him and his home the Atlantic heaved;
And, on the darker side, across the strait
Of starry sheen that softly rippled and flowed
Betwixt the mainland and his isle, it seemed
Death's Gates indeed burst open. The night yawned
Like a foul wound. Black shapes of the outer dark
Poured out of forests older than the world;
And, just as reptiles that take form and hue,
Speckle and blotch, in strange assimilation
From thorn and scrub and stone and the waste earth
Through which they crawl, so that almost they seem

The incarnate spirits of their wilderness,
Were these most horrible kindred of the night.
Æonian glooms unfathomable, grim aisles,
Grotesque, distorted boughs and dancing shades
Outbelched their dusky brood on the dim shore;
Monsters with sooty limbs, red-raddled eyes,
And faces painted yellow, women and men;
Fierce naked giants howling to the moon,
And loathlier Gorgons with long, snaky tresses
Pouring vile purple over pendulous breasts
Like wine-bags. On the mainland beach they lit
A brushwood fire that reddened creek and cove
And lapped their swarthy limbs with hideous tongues
Of flame; so near that by their light Drake saw
The blood upon the dead man's long black hair
Clotting corruption. The fierce funeral pyre
Of all things fair seemed rolling on that shore;
And in that dull, red battle of smoke and flame,
While the sea crunched the pebbles, and dark drums
Rumbled out of the gloom as if this earth
Had some Titanic tigress for a soul
Purring in forests of Eternity

Over her own grim dreams, his lonely spirit
Passed through the circles of a world-wide waste
Darker than ever Dante roamed. No gulf
Was this of fierce harmonious reward,
Where Evil moans in anguish after death,
Where all men reap as they have sown, where gluttons
Gorge upon toads and usurers gulp hot streams
Of molten gold. This was that Malebolge
Which hath no harmony to mortal ears,
But seems the reeling and tremendous dream
Of some omnipotent madman. There he saw
The naked giants dragging to the flames
Young captives hideous with a new despair:
He saw great craggy blood-stained stones upheaved
To slaughter, saw through mists of blood and fire
The cannibal feast prepared, saw filthy hands
Rend limb from limb, and almost dreamed he saw
Foul mouths a-drip with quivering human flesh
And horrible laughter in the crimson storm
That clomb and leapt and stabbed at the high heaven
Till the whole night seemed saturate with red.

And all night long upon the *Golden Hynde,*
A cloud upon the waters, brave Tom Moone
Watched o'er the bulwarks for some dusky plunge
To warn him if that savage crew should mark
His captain and swim over to his isle.
Whistle in hand he watched, his boat well ready,
His men low-crouched around him, swarthy faces
Grim-chinned upon the taffrail, muttering oaths
That trampled down the fear i' their bristly throats,
While at their sides a dreadful hint of steel
Sent stray gleams to the stars. But little heed
Had Drake of all that menaced him, though oft
Some wandering giant, belching from the feast,
All blood-besmeared, would come so near he heard
His heavy breathing o'er the narrow strait.
Yet little care had Drake, for though he sat
Bowed in the body above his quiet dead,
His burning spirit wandered through the wastes,
Wandered through hells behind the apparent hell,
Horrors immeasurable, clutching at dreams
Found fair of old, but now most foul. The world
Leered at him through its old remembered mask

Of beauty: the green grass that clothed the fields
Of England (shallow, shallow fairy dream!)
What was it but the hair of dead men's graves,
Rooted in death, enriched with all decay?
And like a leprosy the hawthorn bloom
Crawled o'er the whitening bosom of the spring;
And bird and beast and insect, ay and man,
How fat they fed on one another's blood!
And Love, what faith in Love, when spirit and flesh
Are found of such a filthy composition?
And Knowledge, God, his mind went reeling back
To that dark voyage on the deadly coast
Of Panama, where one by one his men
Sickened and died of some unknown disease,
Till Joseph, his own brother, in his arms
Died; and Drake trampled down all tender thought,
All human grief, and sought to find the cause,
For his crew's sake, the ravenous unknown cause
Of that fell scourge. There, in his own dark cabin,
Lit by the wild light of the swinging lanthorn,

He laid the naked body on that board
Where they had supped together. He took the knife
From the ague-stricken surgeon's palsied hands,
And while the ship rocked in the eternal seas
And dark waves lapped against the rolling hulk
Making the silence terrible with voices,
He opened his own brother's cold white corse,
That pale deserted mansion of a soul,
Bidding the surgeon mark, with his own eyes,
While yet he had strength to use them, the foul spots,
The swollen liver, the strange sodden heart,
The yellow intestines. Yea, his dry lips hissed
There in the stark face of Eternity
"Seëst thou? Seëst thou? Knowest thou what it means?"
Then, like a dream up-surged the belfried night
Of Saint Bartholomew, the scented palaces
Whence harlots leered out on the twisted streets
Of Paris, choked with slaughter! Europe flamed
With human torches, living altar candles,
Lighted before the Cross where men had hanged

The Christ of little children. Cirque by cirque
The world-wide hell reeled round him, East and
West,
To where the tortured Indians worked the will
Of lordly Spain in golden-famed Peru.
"God, is thy world a madman's dream?" he
groaned:
And suddenly, the clamour on the shore
Sank, and that savage horde melted away
Into the midnight forest as it came,
Leaving no sign, save where the brushwood fire
Still smouldered like a ruby in the gloom;
And into the inmost caverns of his mind
That other clamour sank, and there was peace.
"A madman's dream," he whispered, "Ay, to me
A madman's dream," but better, better far
Than that which bears upon its awful gates,
Gates of a hell defined, unalterable,
Abandon hope all ye who enter here!
Here, here at least the dawn hath power to bring
New light, new hope, new battles. Men may fight
And sweep away that evil, if no more,
At least from the small circle of their swords;

Then die, content if they have struck one stroke
For freedom, knowledge, brotherhood; one stroke
To hasten that great kingdom God proclaims
Each morning through the trumpets of the Dawn.

And far away, in Italy, that night
Young Galileo, gazing upward, heard
The self-same whisper from the abyss of stars
Which lured the soul of Shakespeare as he lay
Dreaming in May-sweet England, even now,
And with its infinite music called once more
The soul of Drake out to the unknown West.

Now like a wild rose in the fields of heaven
Slipt forth the slender fingers of the Dawn
And drew the great grey Eastern curtains back
From the ivory saffroned couch. Rosily slid
One shining foot and one warm rounded knee
From silken coverlets of the tossed-back clouds.
Then, like the meeting after desolate years,
Face to remembered face, Drake saw the Dawn
Step forth in naked splendour o'er the sea;
Dawn, bearing still her rich divine increase

Of beauty, love, and wisdom round the world;
The same, yet not the same. So strangely gleamed
Her pearl and rose across the sapphire waves
That scarce he knew the dead man at his feet.
His world was made anew. Strangely his voice
Rang through that solemn Eden of the morn
Calling his men, and stranger than a dream
Their boats black-blurred against the crimson East,
Or flashing misty sheen where'er the light
Smote on their smooth wet sides, like seraph ships
Moved in a dewy glory towards the land;
Their oars of glittering diamond broke the sea
As by enchantment into burning jewels
And scattered rainbows from their flaming blades.
The clear green water lapping round their prows,
The words of sharp command as now the keels
Crunched on his lonely shore, and the following wave
Leapt slapping o'er the sterns, in that new light
Were more than any miracle. At last
Drake, as they grouped a little way below
The crumbling sandy cliff whereon he stood,

Seeming to overshadow them as he loomed
A cloud of black against the crimson sky,
Spoke, as a man may hardly speak but once:
"My seamen, oh my friends, companions, kings;
For I am least among you, being your captain;
And ye are men, and all men born are kings,
By right divine, and I the least of these,
Because I must usurp the throne of God
And sit in judgment, even till I have set
My seal upon the red wax of this blood,
This blood of my dead friend, ere it grow cold.
Not all the waters of that mighty sea
Could wash my hands of sin if I should now
Falter upon my path. But look to it, you,
Whose word was doom last night to this dead man;
Look to it, I say, look to it! Brave men might
shrink
From this great voyage; but the heart of him
Who dares turn backward now must be so hardy
That God might make a thousand millstones of it
To hang about the necks of those that hurt
Some little child, and cast them in the sea.
Yet if ye will be found so more than bold,

Speak now, and I will hear you: God will judge.
But ye shall take four ships of these my five,
Tear out the lions from their painted shields,
And speed you homeward. Leave me but one ship,
My *Golden Hynde*, and five good friends, nay one,
To watch when I must sleep, and I will prove
This judgment just against the winds of the world.
Now ye that will return, speak: let me know you,
Or be for ever silent; for I swear
Over this butchered body, if any swerve
Hereafter from the straight and perilous way,
He shall not die alone. What? Will none speak?
My comrades and my friends! Yet ye must learn,
Mark me, my friends, I'd have you all to know
That ye are kings. I'll have no jealousies
Aboard my fleet. I'll have the gentleman
To pull and haul wi' the seaman. I'll not have
That canker of the Spaniards in my fleet.
Ye that were captains, I cashier you all.
I'll have no captains; I'll have nought but seamen,
Obedient to my will, because I serve
England. What, will ye murmur? Now, beware,
Lest I should bid you homeward all alone,

You whose white hands are found too delicate
For aught but dallying with your jewelled swords!
And thou, too, Master Fletcher, my ship's
chaplain,
Mark me, I'll have no priestcraft. I have heard
Overmuch talk of judgment from thy lips—
God's judgment here, God's judgment there, upon
us!
Whene'er the winds are contrary, thou takest
Their powers upon thee for thy moment's end.
Thou art God's minister, not God's oracle:
Chain up thy tongue a little, or, by His wounds,
If thou canst read this wide world like a book,
Thou hast so little to fear, I'll set thee adrift
On God's great sea to find thine own way home.
Why, 'tis these very tyrannies o' the soul
We strike at when we strike at Spain for England;
And shall we here, in this great wilderness,
Ungrappled and unchallenged, out of sight,
Alone, without one struggle, sink that flag
Which, when the cannon thundered, could but
stream
Triumphant over all the storms of death.

Nay, Master Wynter and my gallant captains,
I see ye are tamed. Take up your ranks again
In humbleness, remembering ye are kings,
Kings for the sake and by the will of England,
Therefore her servants till your lives' last end.
Comrades, mistake not this, our little fleet
Is freighted with the golden heart of England,
And, if we fail, that golden heart will break.
The world's wide eyes are on us, and our souls
Are woven together into one great flag
Of England. Shall we strike it? Shall it be rent
Asunder with small discord, party strife,
Ephemeral conflict of contemptible tongues,
Or shall it be blazoned, blazoned evermore
On the most heaven-wide page of history?
This is that hour,—I know it in my soul,—
When we must choose for England. Ye are kings,
And sons of Vikings, exiled from your throne.
Have ye forgotten? Nay, your blood remembers!
There is your kingdom, Vikings, that great ocean
Whose tang is in your nostrils. Ye must choose
Whether to reassume it now for England,

To claim its thunders for her panoply,
To lay its lightnings in her sovereign hands,
Win her the great commandment of the sea,
And let its glory roll with her dominion
Round the wide world for ever, sweeping back
All evil deeds and dreams, or whether to yield
For evermore that kinghood. Ye must learn
Here in this golden dawn our great emprise
Is greater than we knew. Eye hath not seen,
Ear hath not heard, what came across the dark
Last night, as there anointed with that blood
I knelt and saw the wonder that should be.
I saw new heavens of freedom, a new earth
Released from all old tyrannies. I saw
The brotherhood of man, for which we rode,
Most ignorant of the splendour of our spears,
Against the crimson dynasties of Spain.
Mother of freedom, home and hope and love,
Our little island, far, how far away,
I saw thee shatter the whole world of hate,
I saw the sunrise on thy helmet flame
With new-born hope for all the world in thee!
Come now, to sea, to sea!"

And ere they knew
What power impelled them, with one mighty cry
They lifted up their hearts to the new dawn
And hastened down the shores and launched the boats,
And in the fierce white out-draught of the waves
Thrust with their brandished oars and the boats leapt
Out, and they settled at the groaning thwarts,
And the white water boiled before their blades,
As, with Drake's iron hand upon the helm,
His own boat led the way; and ere they knew
What power as of a wind bore them along,
Anchor was up, their hands were on the sheets,
The sails were broken out, and that small squadron
Was flying like a sea-bird to the South.
Now to the strait Magellanus they came,
And entered in with ringing shouts of joy.
Nor did they think there was a fairer strait
In all the world than this which lay so calm
Between great silent mountains crowned with snow,

Unutterably lonely. Marvellous
The pomp of dawn and sunset on those heights,
And like a strange new sacrilege the advance
Of prows that ploughed that time-forgotten tide.
But soon rude flaws, cross-currents, tortuous
channels
Bewildered them, and many a league they drove
As down some vaster Acheron, while the coasts
With wailing voices cursed them all night long,
And once again the hideous fires leapt red
By many a grim wrenched crag and gaunt ravine.
So for a hundred leagues of whirling spume
They groped, till suddenly, far away, they saw
Full of the sunset, like a cup of gold,
The purple Westward portals of the strait.
Onward o'er roughening waves they plunged and
reached
Capo Desiderato, where they saw
What seemed stupendous in that lonely place,—
Gaunt, black, and sharp as death against the sky
The Cross, the great black Cross on Cape Desire,
Which dead Magellan raised upon the height
To guide, or so he thought, his wandering ships,

Not knowing they had left him to his doom,
Not knowing how with tears, with tears of joy,
Rapture, and terrible triumph, and deep awe,
Another should come voyaging and read
Unutterable glories in that sign;
While his rough seamen raised their mighty shout,
And, once again, before his wondering eyes,
League upon league of awful burnished gold,
Rolled the unknown immeasurable sea.

Now, in those days, as even Magellan held,
Men thought that Southward of the strait there swept
Firm land up to the white Antarticke Pole,
Which now not far they deemed. But when Drake passed
From out the strait to take his Northward way
Up the Pacific coast, a great head-wind
Suddenly smote them; and the heaving seas
Bulged all around them into billowy hills,
Dark rolling mountains, whose majestic crests
Like wild white flames far-blown and savagely flickering

Swept through the clouds; and on their sullen
slopes
Like wind-whipt withered leaves those little ships,
Now hurtled to the Zenith and now plunged
Down into bottomless gulfs, were suddenly
scattered
And whirled away. Drake, on the *Golden Hynde,*
One moment saw them near him, soaring up
Above him on the huge o'erhanging billows
As if to crash down on his poop; the next,
A mile of howling sea had swept between
Each of those wind-whipt straws, and they were
gone
Through roaring deserts of embattled death,
Where, like a hundred thousand chariots charged
With lightnings and with thunders, one great wave
Leading the unleashed ocean down the storm
Hurled them away to Southward.

One last glimpse
Drake caught o' the *Marygold,* when some mighty
vortex
Wide as the circle of the wide sea-line

Swept them together again. He saw her staggering
With mast snapt short and wreckage-tangled deck
Where men like insects clung. He saw the waves
Leap over her mangled hulk, like wild white wolves,
Volleying out of the clouds down dismal steeps
Of green-black water. Like a wounded steed
Quivering upon its haunches, up she heaved
Her head to throw them off. Then, in one mass
Of fury crashed the great deep over her,
Trampling her down, down into the nethermost pit,
As with a madman's wrath. She rose no more,
And in the stream of the ocean's hurricane laughter
The *Golden Hynde* went hurtling to the South,
With sails rent into ribbons and her mast
Snapt like a twig. Yea, where Magellan thought
Firm land had been, the little *Golden Hynde*
Whirled like an autumn leaf through league on league
Of bursting seas, chaos on crashing chaos,

A rolling wilderness of charging Alps
That shook the world with their tremendous war;
Grim beetling cliffs that grappled with clamorous gulfs,
Valleys that yawned to swallow the wide heaven;
Immense white-flowering fluctuant precipices,
And hills that swooped down at the throat of hell;
From Pole to Pole, one blanching bursting storm
Of world-wide oceans, where the huge Pacific
Roared greetings to the Atlantic, and both swept
In broad white cataracts, league on struggling league,
Pursuing and pursued, immeasurable,
With Titan hands grasping the rent black sky
East, West, North, South. Then, then was battle indeed
Of midget men upon that wisp of grass
The *Golden Hynde,* who, as her masts crashed, hung
Clearing the tiny wreckage from small decks
With ant-like weapons. Not their captain's voice
Availed them now amidst the deafening thunder
Of seas that felt the heavy hand of God,

Only they saw across the blinding spume
In steely flashes, grand and grim, a face,
Like the last glimmer of faith among mankind,
Calm in this warring universe, where Drake
Stood, lashed to his post, beside the helm. Black seas
Buffeted him. Half-stunned he dashed away
The sharp brine from his eagle eyes and turned
To watch some mountain-range come rushing down
As if to o'erwhelm them utterly. Once, indeed,
Welkin and sea were one black wave, white-fanged,
White-crested, and up-heaved so mightily
That, though it coursed more swiftly than a herd
Of Titan steeds upon some terrible plain
Nigh the huge City of Ombos, yet it seemed
Most strangely slow, with all those crumbling crests,
Each like a cataract on a mountain-side,
And moved with the steady majesty of doom
High over him. One moment's flash of fear,
And yet not fear, but rather life's regret,
Felt Drake, then laughed a low deep laugh of joy

Such as men taste in battle; yea, 'twas good
To grapple thus with death; one low deep laugh,
One mutter as of a lion about to spring,
Then burst that thunder o'er him. Height o'er height
The heavens rolled down, and waves were all the world.

Meanwhile, in England, dreaming of her sailor,
Far off, his heart's bride waited, of a proud
And stubborn house the bright and gracious flower.
Whom oft her father urged with scanty grace
That Drake was dead and she had best forget
The fellow, he grunted. For her father's heart
Was fettered with small memories, mocked by all
The greater world's traditions and the trace
Of earth's low pedigree among the suns.
Ringed with the terrible twilight of the Gods,
Ringed with the blood-red dusk of dying nations,
His faith was in his grandam's mighty skirt,
And, in that awful consciousness of power,
Had it not been that even in this he feared
To sully her silken flounce or farthingale

Wi' the white dust on his hands, he would have chalked
To his own shame, thinking it shame, the word
Nearest to God in its divine embrace
Of agonies and glories, the dread word
Demos across that door in Nazareth
Whence came the prentice Carpenter whose voice
Hath shaken kingdoms down, whose menial gibbet
Rises triumphant o'er the wreck of Empires
And stretches out its arms amongst the stars.
But she, his daughter, only let her heart
Loveably forge a charter for her love,
Cheat her false creed with faithful faery dreams
That wrapt her love in mystery; thought, perchance,
He came of some unhappy noble race
Ruined in battle for some lost high cause.
And, in the general mixture of men's blood,
Her dream was truer than his whose bloodless pride
Urged her to wed the chinless, moon-struck fool,
Sprung from five hundred years of idiocy,
Who now besought her hand; would force her bear

Some heir to a calf's tongue and a coronet,
Whose cherished taints of blood will please his friends
With "Yea, Sir William's first-born hath the freak,
The family freak, being embryonic. Yea,
And with a fine half-wittedness, forsooth.
Praise God, our children's children yet shall see
The lord o' the manor muttering to himself
At midnight by the gryphon-guarded gates,
Or gnawing his nails in desolate corridors,
Or pacing moonlit halls, dagger in hand,
Waiting to stab his father's pitiless ghost."
So she—the girl—sweet Bess of Sydenham,
Most innocently proud, was prouder yet
Than thus to let her heart stoop to the lure
Of lordling lovers, though her unstained soul
Slumbered amidst those dreams as in old tales
The princess in the enchanted forest sleeps
Till the prince wakes her with a kiss and draws
The far-flung hues o' the gleaming magic web
Into one heart of flame. And now, for Drake,
She slept like Brynhild in a ring of fire

Which he must pass to win her. For the wrath
Of Spain now flamed, awaiting his return,
All round the seas of home; and even the Queen
Elizabeth blenched, as that tremendous Power
Menaced the heart of England, blenched and vowed
Drake's head to Spain's ambassadors, though still
By subtlety she hoped to find some way
Later to save or warn him ere he came.
Perchance, too,—nay, most like,—he will be slain,
Or even now lies dead, out in the West,
She thought, and then the promise works no harm.
But, day by day, there came as on the wings
Of startled winds from o'er the Spanish Main,
Strange echoes as of sacked and clamouring ports
And battered gates of fabulous golden cities,
A murmur out of the sunsets of Peru,
A sea-bird's wail from Lima. While no less
The wrathful menace gathered up its might
All round our little isle; till now the King
Philip of Spain half secretly decreed
The building of huge docks from which to launch
A Fleet Invincible that should sweep the seas

Of all the world, throttle with one broad grasp
All Protestant rebellion, having stablished
His red feet in the Netherlands, thence to hurl
His whole World-Empire at this little isle,
England, our mother, home and hope and love,
And bend her neck beneath his yoke. For now
No half surrender sought he. At his back,
Robed with the scarlet of a thousand martyrs,
Admonishing him, stood Rome, and, in her hand,
Grasping the Cross of Christ by its great hilt,
She pointed it, like a dagger, tow'rds the throat
Of England.

One long year, two years had passed
Since Drake set sail from grey old Plymouth Sound;
And in those woods of faery wonder still
Slumbered his love in steadfast faith. But now
With louder lungs her father urged—"He is dead:
Forget him. There is one that loves you, seeks
Your hand in marriage, and he is a goodly match
E'en for my daughter. You shall wed him, Bess!"

But when the new-found lover came to woo,
Glancing in summer silks and radiant hose,
Whipt doublet and enormous pointed shoon,
She played him like a fish and sent him home
Spluttering with dismay, a stickleback
Discoloured, a male minnow of dimpled streams
With all his rainbows paling in the prime,
To hide amongst his lilies, while once more
She took her casement seat that overlooked
The sea and read in Master Spenser's book,
Which Francis gave "To my dear lady and queen
Bess," that most rare processional of love—
"Sweet Thames, run softly till I end my song!"
Yet did her father urge her day by day,
And day by day her mother dinned her ears
With petty saws, as—"When *I* was a girl,"
And "I remember what *my* father said,"
And "Love, oh feather-fancies plucked from geese
You call your poets!" Yet she hardly meant
To slight true love, save in her daughter's heart;
For the old folk ever find it hard to see
The passion of their children. When it wakes,

The child becomes a stranger. That small bird
Which was its heart hath left the fostering nest
And flown they know not whither. So with Bess;
But since her soul still slumbered, and the moons
Rolled on and blurred her soul's particular love
With the vague unknown impulse of her youth,
Her brave resistance often melted now
In tears, and her will weakened day by day;
Till on a dreadful summer morn there came,
Borne by a wintry flaw, home to the Thames,
A bruised and battered ship, all that was left,
So said her crew, of Drake's ill-fated fleet.
John Wynter, her commander, told the tale
Of how the *Golden Hynde* and *Marygold*
Had by the wind Euroclydon been driven
Sheer o'er the howling edges of the world;
Of how himself by God's good providence
Was hurled into the strait *Magellanus;*
Of how on the horrible frontiers of the Void
He had watched in vain, lit red with beacon-fires
The desperate coasts o' the black abyss, whence none
Ever returned, though many a week he watched

Beneath the Cross; and only saw God's wrath
Burn through the heavens and devastate the
mountains,
And hurl unheard of oceans roaring down
After the lost ships in one cataract
Of thunder and splendour and fury and rolling
doom.
Then, with a bitter triumph in his face,
As if this were the natural end of all
Such vile plebeians, as if he had foreseen it
As if himself had breathed a tactful hint
Into the aristocratic ears of God,
Her father broke the last frail barriers down,
Broke the poor listless will o' the lonely girl,
Who careless now of aught but misery
Promised to wed their lordling. Mighty speed
They made to press that loveless marriage on;
And ere the May had mellowed into June
Her marriage eve had come. Her cold hands
held
Drake's gift. She scarce could see her name, writ
broad
By that strong hand as it was, *To my Queen Bess.*

She looked out through her casement o'er the sea,
Listening its old enchanted moan, which seemed
Striving to speak, she knew not what. Its breath
Fluttered the roses round the grey old walls,
And shook the starry jasmine. A great moon
Hung like a red lamp in the sycamore.
A corn-crake in the hay-fields far away
Chirped like a cricket, and the night-jar churred
His passionate love-song. Soft-winged moths besieged
Her lantern. Under many a star-stabbed elm
The nightingale began his golden song,
Whose warm thick notes are each a drop of blood
From that small throbbing breast against the thorn
Pressed close to turn the white rose into red;
Even as her lawn-clad may-white bosom pressed
Quivering against the bars, while her dark hair
Streamed round her shoulders and her small bare feet
Gleamed in the dusk. Then spake she to her maid—
"I cannot sleep, I cannot sleep to-night.
Bring thy lute hither and sing. Say, dost thou think

The dead can watch us from their distant world?
Can our dead friends be near us when we weep?
I wish 'twere so! For then my love would come,
No matter then how far, my love would come,
And press a light kiss on these aching eyes
And say, 'Grieve not, dear heart, for I know all,
And I forgive thee.' Ah, then, I should sleep,
Sleep, sleep and dream once more. Last night,
last night,
I know not if it were that song of thine
Which tells of some poor lover, crazed with pain,
Who wanders to the grave-side of his love
And knocks at that cold door until his love
Opens it, and they two for some brief while
Forget their doom in one another's arms
Once more; for, oh, last night, I had a dream;
My love came to me through the Gates of Death:
I know not how he came. I only know
His arms were round me, and, from far away,
From far beyond the stars it seemed, his voice
Breathed, in unutterable grief, farewells
Of shuddering sweetness, clasped in one small
word—
Sweetheart, a joy untold, an untold pain,

Far, far away, although his breath beat warm
Against my cheek and dried mine own poor tears.
Ah, sing that song once more; for I have heard
There are some songs, and this was one I am sure,
Like the grey poppies of those dreaming fields
Where poor dead lovers drift, and in their pain
We lose our own. Give me that poppied sleep,
And if—in dreams—I touch my true love's lips,
Trust me I will not ask ever to wake
Again." Whereat the maiden touched her lute
And sang, low-toned, with pity in her eyes.

Then Bess bowed down her lovely head; her breast
Heaved with short sobs and, sickening at the heart,
She grasped the casement, moaning, " Love, Love,
Love,
Come quickly: come, before it is too late;
Come quickly—oh, come quickly! "
Then her maid
Slipped a soft arm around her and gently drew
The supple quivering body, shaken with sobs,
And all that firm young sweetness, to her breast,
And led her to her couch, and all night long

She watched beside her, till the marriage morn
Blushed in the heartless East. Then swiftly flew
The pitiless moments, till—as in a dream—
And borne along by dreams, or like a lily
Cut from its anchorage in the stream to glide
Down the smooth bosom of an unknown world
Through fields of unknown blossom, so moved Bess
Amongst her maids, as the procession passed
Forth to the little church upon the cliffs,
And, as in those days was the bridal mode,
Her lustrous hair in billowing beauty streamed
Dishevelled o'er her shoulders, while the sun
Caressed her bent and glossy head, and shone
Over the deep blue, white-flaked, wrinkled sea,
On full-blown rosy-petalled sails that flashed
Like flying blossoms fallen from her crown.

BOOK V

I

With the fruit of Aladdin's garden clustering thick in her hold,
With rubies awash in her scuppers and her bilge ablaze with gold,
A world in arms behind her to sever her heart from home,
The Golden Hind *drove onward over the glittering foam.*

II

If we go as we came, by the Southward, we meet wi' the fleets of Spain!
'Tis a thousand to one against us: we'll turn to the West again!
We have captured a China pilot, his charts and his golden keys:
We'll sail to the golden Gateway, over the golden seas.

OVER the immeasurable molten gold
Wrapped in a golden haze, onward they drew;
And now they saw the tiny purple quay
Grow larger and darker and brighten into brown
Across the swelling sparkle of the waves.

DRAKE'S SHIP, *The Golden Hind*

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Brown on the quay, a train of tethered mules
Munched at the nose-bags, while a Spaniard drowsed
On guard beside what seemed at first a heap
Of fish, then slowly turned to silver bars
Up-piled and glistering in the enchanted sun.
Nor did that sentry wake as, like a dream,
The *Golden Hynde* divided the soft sleep
Of warm green lapping water, sidled up,
Sank sail, and moored beside the quay. But Drake,
Lightly leaping ashore and stealing nigh,
Picked up the Spaniard's long gay-ribboned gun
Close to his ear. At once, without a sound,
The watchman opened his dark eyes and stared
As at strange men who suddenly had come,
Borne by some magic carpet, from the stars;
Then, with a courtly bow, his right hand thrust
Within the lace embroideries of his breast.
Politely Drake, with pained apologies
For this disturbance of a cavalier
Napping on guard, straightway resolved to make
Complete amends, by now relieving him

Of these—which doubtless troubled his repose—
These anxious bars of silver. With that word
Two seamen leaped ashore and, gathering up
The bars in a stout old patch of tawny sail,
Slung them aboard. No sooner this was done
Than out o' the valley, like a foolish jest
Out of the mouth of some great John-a-dreams,
In soft procession of buffoonery
A woolly train of llamas proudly came
Stepping by two and two along the quay,
Laden with pack on pack of silver bars
And driven by a Spaniard. His amaze
The seamen greeted with profuser thanks
For his most punctual thought and opportune
Courtesy. None the less they must avouch
It pained them much to see a cavalier
Turned carrier; and, at once, they must insist
On easing him of that too sordid care.

. . . . . .

Then out from Tarapaca once again
They sailed, their hold a glimmering mine of wealth,
Towards Arica and Lima, where they deemed

The prize of prizes waited unaware.
For every year a gorgeous galleon sailed
With all the harvest of Potosi's mines
And precious stones from dead kings' diadems,
Aztecs' and Incas' gem-encrusted crowns,
Pearls from the glimmering Temples of the Moon,
Rich opals with their milky rainbow-clouds,
White diamonds from the Temples of the Sun,
Carbuncles flaming scarlet, amethysts,
Rubies, and sapphires; these to Spain she brought
To glut her priestly coffers. Now not far
Ahead they deemed she lay upon that coast,
Crammed with the lustrous Indies, wrung with threat
And torture from the naked Indian slaves.
To him that spied her topsails first a prize
Drake offered of the wondrous chain he wore;
And every seaman, every ship-boy, watched
Not only for the prize, but for their friends,
If haply these had weathered through the storm.
Nor did they know their friends had homeward turned,

Bearing to England and to England's Queen,
And his heart's queen, the tale that Drake was
dead.

Northward they cruised along a warm wild coast
That like a most luxurious goddess drowsed
Supine to heaven, her arms behind her head,
One knee up-thrust to make a mountain-peak,
Her rosy breast up-heaving their soft snow
In distant Andes, and her naked side
With one rich curve for half a hundred leagues
Bathed by the creaming foam; her heavy hair
Fraught with the perfume of a thousand forests
Tossed round about her beauty; and her mouth
A scarlet mystery of distant flower
Up-turned to take the kisses of the sun.
But like a troop of boys let loose from school
The adventurers went by, startling the stillness
Of that voluptuous dream-encumbered shore
With echoing shouts of laughter and alien song.

But as they came to Arica, from afar
They heard the clash of bells upon the breeze,

And knew that Rumour with her thousand wings
Had rushed before them. Horsemen in the night
Had galloped through the white coast-villages
And spread the dreadful cry "El Draque!"
abroad;
And when the gay adventurers drew nigh
They found the quays deserted, and the ships
All flown, except one little fishing-boat,
Wherein an old man like a tortoise moved
A wrinkled head above the rusty net
His crawling hands repaired. He seemed to dwell
Outside the world of war and peace, outside
Everything save his daily task, and cared
No whit who else might win or lose; for all
The pilot asked of him without demur
He answered, scarcely looking from his work.
A galleon laden with eight hundred bars
Of silver, not three hours ago had flown
Northward, he muttered. Ere the words were
out,
The will of Drake thrilled through the *Golden Hynde*
Like one sharp trumpet-call, and ere they knew

What power impelled them, crowding on all sail
Northward they surged, and roaring down the
wind
At Chiuli, port of Arequipa, saw
The chase at anchor. Wondering they came
With all the gunners waiting at their guns
Bare-armed and silent—nearer, nearer yet,—
Close to the enemy. But no sight or sound
Of living creature stirred upon her decks.
Only a great grey cat lay in the sun
Upon a warm smooth cannon-butt. A chill
Ran through the veins of even the boldest there
At that too peaceful silence. Cautiously
Drake neared her in his pinnace; cautiously,
Cutlass in hand, up that mysterious hull
He clomb, and wondered, as he climbed, to breathe
The friendly smell o' the pitch and hear the waves
With their incessant old familiar sound
Crackling and slapping against her windward
flank.
A ship of dreams was that; for when they reached
The silent deck, they saw no crouching forms,
They heard no sound of life. Only the hot
Creak of the cordage whispered in the sun.

The cat stood up and yawned, and slunk away
Slowly, with furtive glances. The great hold
Was empty, and the rich cabin stripped and bare.
Suddenly one of the seamen with a cry
Pointed where, close inshore, a little boat
Stole towards the town; and, with a louder cry,
Drake bade his men aboard the *Golden Hynde*.
Scarce had they pulled two hundred yards away
When, with a roar that seemed to buffet the heavens
And rip the heart of the sea out, one red flame
Blackened with fragments, the great galleon burst
Asunder! All the startled waves were strewn
With wreckage; and Drake laughed—"My lads, we have diced
With death to-day, and won! My merry lads,
It seems that Spain is bolting with the stakes!
Now, if I have to stretch the skies for sails
And summon the blasts of God up from the South
To fill my canvas, I will overhaul
Those dusky devils with the treasure-ship
That holds our hard-earned booty. Pull hard all,
Hard for the *Golden Hynde*."

And so they came
At dead of night on Callao de Lima!
They saw the harbour lights across the waves
Glittering, and the shadowy hulks of ships
Gathered together like a flock of sheep
Within the port. With shouts and clink of chains
A shadowy ship was entering from the North,
And like the shadow of that shadow slipped
The *Golden Hynde* beside her thro' the gloom;
And side by side they anchored in the port
Amidst the shipping! Over the dark tide
A small boat from the customs-house drew near.
A sleepy, yawning, gold-laced officer
Boarded the *Golden Hynde,* and with a cry,
Stumbling against a cannon-butt, he saw
The bare-armed British seamen in the gloom
All waiting by their guns. Wildly he plunged
Over the side and urged his boat away,
Crying, "El Draque! El Draque!" At that dread word
The darkness filled with clamour, and the ships,
Cutting their cables, drifted here and there
In mad attempts to seek the open sea.

Wild lights burnt hither and thither, and all the
port,
One furnace of confusion, heaved and seethed
In terror; for each shadow of the night,
Nay, the great night itself, was all *El Draque*.
The Dragon's wings were spread from quay to
quay,
The very lights that burnt from mast to mast
And flared across the tide kindled his breath
To fire; while here and there a British pinnace
Slipped softly thro' the roaring gloom and glare,
Ransacking ship by ship; for each one thought
A fleet had come upon them. Each gave up
The struggle as each was boarded; while,
elsewhere,
Cannon to cannon, friends bombarded friends.

Yet not one ounce of treasure in Callao
They found; for, fourteen days before they came,
That greatest treasure-ship of Spain, with all
The gorgeous harvest of that year, had sailed
For Panama: her ballast—silver bars;
Her cargo—rubies, emeralds, and gold.

Out through the clamour and the darkness, out,
Out to the harbour mouth, the *Golden Hynde,*
Steered by the iron soul of Drake, returned:
And where the way was blocked, her cannon clove
A crimson highway to the midnight sea.
Then Northward, Northward, o'er the jewelled main,
Under the white moon like a storm they drove
In quest of the *Cacafuego.* Fourteen days
Her start was; and at dawn the fair wind sank,
And chafing lay the *Golden Hynde,* becalmed;
While, on the hills, the Viceroy of Peru
Marched down from Lima with two thousand men,
And sent out four huge ships of war to sink
Or capture the fierce Dragon. Loud laughed Drake
To see them creeping nigh, urged with great oars,
Then suddenly pause; for none would be the first
To close with him. And, ere they had steeled their hearts
To battle, a fair breeze broke out anew,
And Northward sped the little *Golden Hynde*

In quest of the lordliest treasure-ship of Spain.

. . . . . .

Behind her lay a world in arms; for now
Wrath and confusion clamoured for revenge
From sea to sea. Spain claimed the pirate's head
From England, and awaited his return
With all her tortures. And where'er he passed
He sowed the dragon's teeth, and everywhere
Cadmean broods of arméd men arose
And followed, followed on his fiery trail.
Men toiled at Lima to fit out a fleet
Grim enough to destroy him. All night long
The flare went up from cities on the coast
Where men like naked devils toiled to cast
Cannon that might have overwhelmed the powers
Of Michael when he drave that hideous rout
Through livid chaos to the black abyss.
Small hope indeed there seemed of safe return;
But Northward sped the little *Golden Hynde,*
The world-watched midget ship of eighteen guns,
Undaunted; and upon the second dawn
Sighted a galleon, not indeed the chase,
Yet worth a pause; for out of her they took—

Embossed with emeralds large as pigeon's eggs—
A golden crucifix, with eighty pounds
In weight of gold. The rest they left behind;
And onward, onward, to the North they flew—
A score of golden miles, a score of green,
An hundred miles, eight hundred miles of foam,
Rainbows and fire, ransacking as they went
Ship after ship for news o' the chase and gold;
Learning from every capture that they drew
Nearer and nearer. At Truxillo, dim
And dreaming city, a-drowse with purple flowers,
She had paused, ay, paused to take a freight of gold!
At Paita—she had passed two days in front,
Only two days, two days ahead; nay, one!
At Quito, close inshore, a youthful page,
Bright-eyed, ran up the rigging and cried, "A sail!
A sail! The *Cacafuego!* And the chain
Is mine!" And by the strange cut of her sails,
Whereof they had been told in Callao,
They knew her!
Heavily laden with her gems,
Lazily drifting with her golden fruitage,

Over the magic seas they saw her hull
Loom as they onward drew; but Drake, for fear
The prey might take alarm and run ashore,
Trailed wine-skins, filled with water, o'er the side
To hold his ship back, till the darkness fell,
And with the night the off-shore wind arose.
At last the sun sank down, the rosy light
Faded from Andes' peaked and bosomed snow:
The night-wind rose: the wine-skins were
uphauled;
And, like a hound unleashed, the *Golden Hynde*
Leapt forward thro' the gloom.
A cable's length
Divided them. The *Cacafuego* heard
A rough voice in the darkness bidding her
Heave to! She held her course. Drake gave the
word.
A broadside shattered the night, and over her side
Her main-yard clattered like a broken wing!
On to her decks the British sea-dogs swarmed,
Cutlass in hand: that fight was at an end.

The ship was cleared, a prize crew placed on
board,

Then both ships turned their heads to the open sea.
At dawn, being out of sight of land, they 'gan
Examine the great prize. None ever knew
Save Drake and Gloriana what wild wealth
They had captured there. Thus much at least was known:
An hundredweight of gold, and twenty tons
Of silver bullion; thirteen chests of coins;
Nuggets of gold unnumbered; countless pearls,
Diamonds, and emeralds; but the worth of these
Was past all reckoning. In the crimson dawn,
Ringed with the lonely pomp of sea and sky,
The naked-footed seamen bathed knee-deep
In gold and gathered up Aladdin's fruit—
All-coloured gems—and tossed them in the sun.
The hold like one great elfin orchard gleamed
With dusky globes and tawny glories piled,
Hesperian apples, heap on mellow heap,
Rich with the hues of sunset, rich and ripe
And ready for the enchanted cider-press;
An Emperor's ransom in each burning orb;
A kingdom's purchase in each clustered bough;
The freedom of all slaves in every chain.

BOOK VI

NOW like the soul of Ophir on the sea
Glittered the *Golden Hynde,* and all her heart
Turned home to England. As a child that finds
A ruby ring upon the highway, straight
Homeward desires to run with it, so she
Yearned for her home and country. Yet the world
Was all in arms behind her. Fleet on fleet
Awaited her return. Along the coast
The very churches melted down their chimes
And cast them into cannon. To the South
A thousand cannon watched Magellan's straits,
And fleets were scouring all the sea like hounds,
With orders that where'er they came on Drake,
Although he were the Dragon of their dreams,
They should out-blast his thunders and convey,
Dead or alive, his body back to Spain.

And Drake laughed out and said, " My trusty lads

Of Devon, you have made the wide world ring
With England's name; you have swept one half the seas
From sky to sky; and in our oaken hold
You have packed the gorgeous Indies. We shall sail
But slowly with such wealth. If we return,
We are one against ten thousand! We will seek
The fabled Northern passage, take our gold
Safe home; then out to sea again and try
Our guns against their guns."

. . . . . .

And as they sailed
Northward, they swooped on warm blue Guatulco
For food and water. Nigh the dreaming port
The grand alcaldes in high conclave sat,
Blazing with gold and scarlet, as they tried
A batch of negro slaves upon the charge
Of idleness in Spanish mines; dumb slaves,
With bare scarred backs and labour-broken knees,
And sorrowful eyes like those of wearied kine
Spent from the ploughing. Even as the judge
Rose to condemn them to the knotted lash

The British boat's crew, quiet and compact,
Entered the court. The grim judicial glare
Grew wider with amazement, and the judge
Staggered against his gilded throne.
"I thank
Almighty God," cried Drake, "who hath given
me this—
That I who once, in ignorance, procured
Slaves for the golden bawdy-house of Spain,
May now, in England's name, help to requite
That wrong. For now I say in England's name,
Where'er her standard flies, the slave shall stand
Upright, the shackles fall from off his limbs.
Unyoke the prisoners: tell them they are men
Once more, not beasts of burden. Set them free;
But take these gold and scarlet popinjays
Aboard my *Golden Hynde;* and let them write
An order that their town shall now provide
My boats with food and water."
This being done,
The slaves being placed in safety on the prize,
The *Golden Hynde* revictualled and the casks
Replenished with fresh water, Drake set free

The judges and swept Northward once again;
And, off the coast of Nicaragua, found
A sudden treasure better than all gold;
For on the track of the China trade they caught
A ship whereon two China pilots sailed,
And in their cabin lay the secret charts,
Red hieroglyphs of Empire, unknown charts
Of silken sea-roads down the golden West
Where all roads meet and East and West are one.
And, with that mystery stirring in their hearts
Like a strange cry from home, Northward they swept
And Northward, till the soft luxurious coasts
Hardened, the winds grew bleak, the great green waves
Loomed high like mountains round them, and the spray
Froze on their spars and yards. Fresh from the warmth
Of tropic seas the men could hardly brook
That cold; and when the floating hills of ice
Like huge green shadows crowned with ghostly snow

Went past them with strange whispers in the gloom,
Or took mysterious colours in the dawn,
Their hearts misgave them; and they found no way;
But all was iron shore and icy sea.
And one by one the crew fell sick to death
In that fierce winter, and the land still ran
Westward and showed no passage. Tossed with storms,
Onward they plunged, or furrowed gentler tides
Of ice-lit emerald that made the prow
A faery beak of some enchanted ship
Flinging wild rainbows round her as she drove
Thro' seas unsailed by mortal mariners,
Past isles unhailed of any human voice,
Where sound and silence mingled in one song
Of utter solitude. Ever as they went
The flag of England blazoned the broad breeze,
Northward, where never ship had sailed before,
Northward, till lost in helpless wonderment,
Dazed as a soul awakening from the dream
Of death to some wild dawn in Paradise

(Yet burnt with cold as they whose very tears
Freeze on their faces where Cocytus wails)
All world-worn, bruised, wing-broken, wracked, and wrenched,
Blackened with lightning, scarred as with evil deeds,
But all embalmed in beauty by that sun
Which never sets, bosomed in peace at last
The *Golden Hynde* rocked on a glittering calm.
Seas that no ship had ever sailed, from sky
To glistening sky, swept round them. Glory and gleam,
Glamour and lucid rapture and diamond air
Embraced her broken spars, begrimed with gold
Her gloomy hull, rocking upon a sphere
New made, it seemed, mysterious with the first
Mystery of the world, where holy sky
And sacred sea shone like the primal Light
Of God, a-stir with whispering sea-bird's wings
And glorious with clouds. Only, all day,
All night, the rhythmic utterance of His Will
In the deep sigh of seas, that washed His throne,
Rose and relapsed across Eternity,

Timed to the pulse of æons. All their world
Seemed strange as unto us the great new heavens
And glittering shores, if on some aery bark
To Saturn's coasts we came and traced no more
The tiny gleam of our familiar earth
Far off, but heard tremendous oceans roll
Round unimagined continents, and saw
Terrible mountains unto which our Alps
Were less than mole-hills, and such gaunt ravines
Cleaving them and such cataracts roaring down
As burst the gates of our earth-moulded senses
Pour the eternal glory on our souls,
And, while ten thousand chariots bring the dawn,
Hurl us poor midgets trembling to our knees.
Glory and glamour and rapture of lucid air
Ice cold, with subtle colours of the sky
Embraced her broken spars, belted her hulk
With brilliance, while she dipped her jacinth beak
In waves of mounded splendour, and sometimes
A great ice-mountain flashed and floated by
Throned on the waters, pinnacled and crowned
With all the smouldering jewels in the world;
Or in the darkness, glimmering berg on berg,

All emerald to the moon, went by like ghosts
Whispering to the South.
There, as they lay,
Waiting a wind to fill the stiffened sails,
Their hearts remembered that in England now
The Spring was nigh, and in that lonely sea
The skilled musicians filled their eyes with home.

SONG

I

It is the Spring-tide now!
Under the hawthorn bough
The milkmaid goes:
Her eyes are violets blue
Washed with the morning dew,
Her mouth a rose.
It is the Spring-tide now.

II

The lanes are growing sweet,
The lambkins frisk and bleat
In all the meadows:
The glossy dappled kine

Blink in the warm sunshine,
Cooling their shadows.
It is the Spring-tide now.

III

Soon hand in sunburnt hand
Thro' God's green fairyland,
England, our home,
Whispering as they stray
Adown the primrose way,
Lovers will roam.
It is the Spring-tide now.

And then, with many a chain of linkéd sweetness,
Harmonious gold, they drew their hearts and souls
Back, back to England, thoughts of wife and child,
Mother and sweetheart and the old companions,
The twisted streets of London and the deep
Delight of Devon lanes, all softly voiced
In words or cadences, made them breathe hard
And gaze across the everlasting sea,
Craving for that small isle so far away.

Song

I

O you beautiful land,
Deep-bosomed with beeches and bright
With the flowery largesse of May
Sweet from the palm of her hand
Out-flung, till the hedges grew white
As the green-arched billows with spray.

II

White from the fall of her feet
The daisies awake in the sun!
Cliff-side and valley and plain
With the breath of the thyme growing sweet
Laugh, for the Spring is begun;
And Love hath turned homeward again.
O you beautiful land! &c.

III

Where should the home be of Love,
But there, where the hawthorn-tree blows,
And the milkmaid trips out with her pail,

And the skylark in heaven above
Sings, till the West is a rose
And the East is a nightingale?
O you beautiful land! &c.

IV

There where the sycamore trees
Are shading the satin-skinned kine,
And oaks, whose brethren of old
Conquered the strength of the seas,
Grow broad in the sunlight and shine
Crowned with their cressets of gold;
O you beautiful land! &c.

V

Deep-bosomed with beeches and bright
With rose-coloured cloudlets above;
Billowing broad and grand
Where the meadows with blossom are white
For the foot-fall, the foot-fall of Love.
O you beautiful land!

VI

How should we sing of thy beauty,
England, mother of men,

We that can look in thine eyes
And see there the splendour of duty
Deep as the depth of their ken,
Wide as the ring of thy skies.

VII

O you beautiful land,
Deep-bosomed with beeches and bright
With the flowery largesse of May
Sweet from the palm of her hand
Out-flung, till the hedges grew white
As the green-arched billows with spray.
O you beautiful land!

And when a fair wind rose again, there seemed
No hope of passage by that fabled way
Northward, and suddenly Drake put down his helm
And, with some wondrous purpose in his eyes,
Turned Southward once again, until he found
A lonely natural harbour on the coast
Near San Francisco, where the cliffs were white
Like those of England, and the soft soil teemed

With gold. There they careened the *Golden Hynde*—
Her keel being thick with barnacles and weeds—
And built a fort and dockyard to refit
Their little wandering home, not half so large
As many a coasting barque to-day that scarce
Would cross the Channel, yet she had swept the seas
Of half the world, and even now prepared
For new adventures greater than them all.
And as the sound of chisel and hammer broke
The stillness of that shore, shy figures came,
Keen-faced and grave-eyed Indians, from the woods
To bow before the strange white-faced newcomers
As gods. Whereat the chaplain much aghast
Persuaded them with signs and broken words
And grunts that even Drake was but a man,
Whom none the less the savages would crown
With woven flowers and barbarous ritual
King of New Albion—so the seamen called
That land, remembering the white cliffs of home.
Much they implored, with many a sign and cry,

Which by the rescued slaves upon the prize
Were part interpreted, that Drake would stay
And rule them; and the vision of the great
Empire of Englishmen arose and flashed
A moment round them, on that lonely shore.
A small and weather-beaten band they stood,
Bronzed seamen by the laughing rescued slaves,
Ringed with gigantic loneliness and saw
An Empire that should liberate the world;
A power before the lightning of whose arms
Darkness should die and all oppression cease;
A Federation of the strong and weak,
Whereby the weak were strengthened and the strong
Made stronger in the increasing good of all;
A gathering up of one another's loads;
A turning of the wasteful rage of war
To accomplish large and fruitful tasks of peace,
Even as the strength of some great stream is turned
To grind the corn for bread. E'en thus on England
That splendour dawned which these in dreams foresaw

And saw not with their living eyes, but thou,
England, mayst lift up eyes at last and see,
Who, like that angel of the Apocalypse,
Hast set one foot upon thy sea-girt isle,
The other upon the waters, and canst raise
Now, if thou wilt, above the assembled nations,
The trumpet of deliverance to thy lips.

. . . . . .

At last their task was done, the *Golden Hynde*
Undocked, her white wings hoisted; and away
Westward they swiftly glided from that shore
Where, with a wild lament, their Indian friends,
Knee-deep i' the creaming foam, all stood at gaze,
Like men that for one moment in their lives
Have seen a mighty drama cross their path
And played upon the stage of vast events
Knowing, henceforward, all their life is nought.
But Westward sped the little *Golden Hynde*
Across the uncharted ocean, with no guide
But that great homing cry of all their hearts.
Far out of sight of land they steered, straight out
Across the great Pacific, in those days
When even the compass proved no trusty guide,

Straight out they struck in that small bark, straight
out
Week after week, without one glimpse of aught
But heaving seas, across the uncharted waste
Straight to the sunset. Laughingly they sailed,
With all that gorgeous booty in their holds,
A splendour dragging deep through seas of doom,
A prey to the first great hurricane that blew
Except their God averted it. And still
Their skilled musicians cheered the way along
To shores beyond the sunset and the sea.
And oft at nights, the yellow fo'c'sle lanthorn
Swung over swarthy singing faces grouped
Within the four small wooden walls that made
Their home and shut them from the unfathomable
Depths of mysterious gloom without that rolled
All round them; or Tom Moone would heartily
troll
A simple stave that struggled oft with thoughts
Beyond its reach, yet reached their hearts no less.

Song

I

Good luck befall you, mariners all
That sail this world so wide!
Whither we go, not yet we know:
We steer by wind and tide.
Be it right or wrong, I sing this song;
For now it seems to me
Men steer their souls thro' rocks and shoals
As mariners use by sea.

Chorus: *As mariners use by sea,*
My lads,
As mariners use by sea!

II

And now they plough to windward, now
They drive before the gale!
Now are they hurled across the world
With torn and tattered sail;
Yet, as they will, they steer and still
Defy the world's rude glee:
Till death o'erwhelm them, mast and helm,
They ride and rule the sea.

Chorus: *They ride and rule the sea*
My lads,
They ride and rule the sea!

. . . . .

Meantime, in England, Bess of Sydenham,
Drake's love and queen, being told that Drake was dead,
And numbed with grief, obeying her father's will
That dreadful summer morn in bridal robes
Had passed to wed her father's choice. The sun
Streamed smiling on her as she went, half-dazed,
Amidst her smiling maids. Nigh to the sea
The church was, and the mellow marriage bells
Mixed with its music. Far away, white sails
Spangled the sapphire, white as flying blossoms
New-fallen from her crown; but as the glad
And sad procession neared the little church,
From some strange ship-of-war, far out at sea,
There came a sudden tiny puff of smoke—
And then a dull strange throb, a whistling hiss,
And scarce a score of yards away a shot
Ploughed up the turf. None knew, none ever knew

From whence it came, whether a perilous jest
Of English seamen, or a wanton deed
Of Spaniards, or mere accident; but all
Her maids in flight were scattered. Bess awoke
As from a dream, crying aloud—" 'Tis he,
'Tis he that sends this message. He is not dead.
I will not pass the porch. Nay, take me home,
'Twas he that sent that message."
Nought availed,
Her father's wrath, her mother's tears, her maids'
Cunning persuasions, nought; home she returned,
And waited for the dead to come to life;
Nor waited long; for ere that month was out,
Rumour on rumour reached the coasts of England,
Borne as it seemed on sea-birds' wings, that Drake
Was on his homeward way.

BOOK VII

THE imperial wrath of Spain, one world-wide sea
Of furious pomp and flouted power, now surged
All round this little isle, with one harsh roar
Deepening for Drake's return—"The *Golden Hynde*
Ye swore had foundered, Drake ye swore was drowned;
They are on their homeward way! The head of Drake!
What answer, what account, what recompense
Now can ye yield our might invincible
Except the head of Drake, whose bloody deeds
Have reddened the Pacific, who hath sacked
Cities of gold, burnt fleets, and ruined realms,—
What answer but his life?"
To which the Queen
Who saw the storm of Europe slowly rising

In awful menace o'er her wave-beat throne,
And midmost of the storm, the ensanguined robes
Of Rome and murderous hand, grasping the Cross
By its great hilt, pointing it like a brand
Blood-blackened at the throat of England, saw
Like skeleton castles wrapt in rolling mist
The monstrous engines and designs of war,
The secret fleets and brooding panoplies
Philip prepared, growing from day to day
In dusk armipotent and embattled gloom
Surrounding her, replied: "The life of Drake,
If, on our strict inquiry, in due order
We find that Drake have hurt our friends, mark
well,
If Drake have hurt our friends, the life of Drake."

. . . . . .

And while the world awaited him, as men
Might wait an earthquake, quietly one grey morn,
One grey October morn of mist and rain
When all the window-panes in Plymouth dripped
With listless drizzle, and only through her streets
Rumbled the death-cart with its dreary bell
Monotonously plangent (for the plague

Had lately like a vampire sucked the veins
Of Plymouth town), a little weed-clogged ship,
Grey as a ghost, glided into the Sound
And anchored, scarce a soul to see her come,
And not an eye to read the faded scroll
Around her battered prow—the *Golden Hynde.*
Then, thro' the dumb grey misty listless port,
A rumour like the colours of the dawn
Streamed o'er the shining quays, up the wet streets,
In at the tavern doors, flashed from the panes
And turned them into diamonds, fired the pools
In every muddy lane with Spanish gold,
Flushed in a thousand faces, Drake is come!
Down every crowding alley the urchins leaped
Tossing their caps, the *Golden Hynde* is come!
Fishermen, citizen, prentice, dame and maid,
Fat justice, floury baker, bloated butcher,
Fishwife, minister and apothecary,
Yea, even the driver of the death-cart, leaving
His ghastly load, using his dreary bell
To merrier purpose, down the seething streets,
Panting, tumbling, jostling, helter-skelter
To the water-side, to the water-side they rushed,

And some knee-deep beyond it, all one wild
Welcome to Francis Drake!
Wild kerchiefs fluttering, thunderous hurrahs
Rolling from quay to quay, a thousand arms
Outstretched to that grey ghostly little ship
At whose masthead the British flag still flew;
Then, over all, in one tumultuous tide
Of pealing joy, the Plymouth bells outclashed
A nation's welcome home to Francis Drake.

The very *Golden Hynde,* no idle dream,
The little ship that swept the Spanish Main,
Carelessly lying there, in Plymouth Sound,
The *Golden Hynde,* the wonder of the world,
A glory wrapt her greyness, and no boat
Dared yet approach, save one, with Drake's close
friends,
Who came to warn him: "England stands alone
And Drake is made the price of England's peace.
The Queen, perforce, must temporise with Spain,
The Invincible! She hath forfeited thy life
To Spain against her will. Only by this
Rejection of thee as a privateer

She averted instant war; for now the menace
Of Spain draws nigher, looms darker every hour.
The world is made Spain's footstool. Philip, the
King,
E'en now hath added to her boundless power
Without a blow, the vast domains and wealth
Of Portugal, and deadlier yet, a coast
That crouches over against us. Cadiz holds
A huge Armada, none knows where to strike;
And even this day a flying horseman brought
Rumours that Spain hath landed a great force
In Ireland. Mary of Scotland only waits
The word to stab us in the side for Rome.
The Queen, weighed down by Burleigh and the
friends
Of peace at any cost, may yet be driven
To make thy life our ransom, which indeed
She hath already sworn, or seemed to swear."

To whom Drake answered, "Gloriana lives;
And in her life mine only fear lies dead,
Mine only fear, for England, not myself.
Willing am I and glad, as I have lived,

To die for England's sake.
Yet, lest the Queen be driven now to restore
This cargo that I bring her—a world's wealth,
The golden springs of all the power of Spain,
The jewelled hearts of all those cruel realms
(For I have plucked them out) beyond the sea;
Lest she be driven to yield them up again
For Rome and Rome's delight, I will warp out
Behind St. Nicholas' Island. The fierce plague
In Plymouth shall be colour and excuse,
Until my courier return from court
With Gloriana's will. If it be death,
I'll out again to sea, strew its rough floor
With costlier largesses than kings can throw,
And, ere I die, will singe the Spaniard's beard
And set the fringe of his imperial robe
Blazing along his coasts. Then let him roll
His galleons round the little *Golden Hynde,*
Bring her to bay, if he can, on the high seas,
Ring us about with thousands, we'll not yield,
I and my *Golden Hynde,* we will go down,
With flag still flying on the last stump left us,
And all my cannon spitting out the fires
Of everlasting scorn into his face."

So Drake warped out the *Golden Hynde* anew
Behind St. Nicholas' Island. She lay there,
The small grey-golden centre of the world
That raged all round her, the last hope, the star
Of Protestant freedom, she, the outlawed ship
Holding within her the great head and heart
Of England's ocean power; and all the fleets
That have enfranchised earth, in that small ship,
Lay waiting for their doom.

Past her at night
Fisher-boats glided, wondering as they heard
In the thick darkness the great songs they deemed
Must oft have risen from many a lonely sea;
For oft had Spaniards brought a rumour back
Of that strange pirate who in royal state
Sailed to a sound of violins, and dined
With skilled musicians round him, turning all
Battle and storm and death into a song.

Song

The same Sun is o'er us,
The same Love shall find us,

The same and none other
Wherever we be;
With the same hope before us,
The same home behind us,
England, our mother,
Ringed round with the sea.

No land in the ring of it
Now, all around us
Only the splendid
Resurging unknown;
How should we sing of it,
This that hath found us
By the great stars attended
At midnight, alone?

Our highway none knoweth,
Yet our blood hath discerned it!
Clear, clear is our path now
Whose foreheads are free,
Where the hurricane bloweth
Our spirits have learned it,
'Tis the highway of wrath, now,
The storm's way, the sea.

When the waters lay breathless
Gazing at Hesper
Guarding that glorious
Fruitage of gold,
Heard we the deathless
Wonderful whisper
We follow, victorious
To-night, as of old.

Ah, the broad miles of it
White with the onset
Of waves without number
Warring for glee;
Ah, the soft smiles of it
Down to the sunset,
Sacred for slumber
The swan's bath, the sea!

When the breakers charged thundering
In thousands all round us
With a lightning of lances
Up-hurtled on high,
When the stout ships were sundering
A rapture hath crowned us

Like the wild light that dances
On the crests that flash by.

Our highway none knoweth,
Yet our blood hath discerned it!
Clear, clear is our path now
Whose foreheads are free,
Where Euroclydon bloweth
Our spirits have learned it,
'Tis the highway of wrath, now,
The storm's way, the sea!

Who now will follow us
Where England's flag leadeth us,
Where gold not inveigles,
Nor statesmen betray?
Tho' the deep midnight swallow us,
Let her cry when she needeth us,
We return, her sea-eagles,
The hurricane's way.

For the same Sun is o'er us,
The same Love shall find us,
The same and none other

Wherever we be;
With the same hope before us,
The same home behind us,
England, our mother,
Ringed round with the sea.

So six days passed, and on the seventh returned
The courier, with a message from the Queen
Summoning Drake to court, bidding him bring
Also such curious trifles of his voyage
As might amuse her, also be of good cheer
She bade him, and rest well content his life
In Gloriana's hands were safe: so Drake
Laughingly landed with his war-bronzed crew
Amid the wide-eyed throng on Plymouth beach
And loaded twelve big pack-horses with pearls
Beyond all price, diamonds, crosses of gold,
Rubies that smouldered once for Aztec kings,
And great dead Incas' gem-encrusted crowns.
Also, he said, we'll add a sack or twain
Of gold doubloons, pieces of eight moidores,
And such-like Spanish trash, for those poor lords
At court, lilies that toil not neither spin,

Wherefore, methinks their purses oft grow lean
In these harsh times. 'Twere even as well their
tongues
Wagged in our favour, now, as in our blame.

. . . . .

Six days thereafter a fearful whisper reached
Mendoza, plenipotentiary of Spain
In London, that the pirate Drake was now
In secret conference with the Queen; nay more,
That he, the Master-thief of the golden world,
Drake, even he, that bloody buccaneer,
Had six hours' audience with her Majesty
Daily—nay, more, walked with her in her garden
Alone, among the fiery Autumn leaves,
Talking of God knows what, and suddenly
The temporizing diplomatic voice
Of caution he was wont to expect from England
And blandly accept as his imperial due
Changed to a ringing key of firm resolve,
Resistance—nay, defiance. For when he came
Demanding audience of the Queen, behold!
Her officers of state with mouths awry
Informed the high ambassador of Spain,

Despite his pomp and circumstance, the Queen
Could not receive him, being in conference
With some rough seaman, pirate, what you will,
A fellow made of bronze, a buccaneer,
Maned like a lion, bearded like a pard,
With hammered head, clamped jaws and great deep eyes
That burned with fierce blue colours of the brine,
And liked not Spain—Drake! 'Twas the very name,
One Francis Drake! A Titan that had stood,
Thundering commands against the thundering heavens,
Of lightning-shattered, storm-swept decks and drunk
Great draughts of glory from the rolling sea,
El Draque! El Draque! Nor could she promise aught
To Spain's ambassador, nor see his face
Again, while yet one Spanish musketeer
Remained in Ireland.

Vainly the Spaniard raged
Of restitution, recompense; for now

Had Drake brought up the little *Golden Hynde*
To London, and the rumour of her wealth
Out-topped the wild reality. The crew
Were princes as they swaggered down the streets
In weather-beaten splendour. Out of their doors
To wonder and stare the jostling citizens ran
When They went by; and through the length and breadth
Of England, now, the gathering glory of life
Shone like the dawn. O'er hill and dale it streamed,
Dawn, everlasting and almighty dawn,
Making a golden pomp of every oak—
Had not its British brethren swept the seas?—
In each remotest hamlet, by the hearth,
The cart, the grey church-porch, the village pump,
By meadow and mill and old manorial hall,
By turnpike and by tavern, farm and forge,
Men staved the crimson vintage of romance
And held it up against the light and drank it,
And with it drank confusion to the wrath
That menaced England, but eternal honour,
While blood ran in their veins, to Francis Drake.

BOOK VIII

MEANWHILE, young Bess of Sydenham, the queen
Of Drake's deep heart, emprisoned in her home,
Fenced by her father's angry watch and ward
Lest he—the poor plebeian dread of Spain,
Shaker of nations, king of the untamed seas—
Might win some word with her, sweet Bess, the flower,
Triumphant o'er their rusty heraldries,
Waited her lover, as in ancient tales
The pale princess from some grey wizard's tower
Midmost the deep sigh of enchanted woods
Looks for the starry flash of her knight's shield;
Or on the further side o' the magic West
Sees pushing through the ethereal golden gloom
Some blurred black prow, with loaded colours coarse,
Clouded with sunsets of a mortal sea,

And rich with earthly crimson. She, with lips
Apart, still waits the shattering golden thrill
When it shall grate the coasts of Fairyland.

Only, to Bess of Sydenham, there came
No sight or sound to break that frozen spell
And lonely watch, no message from her love,
Or none that reached her restless helpless hands.
Only the general rumour of the world
Borne to her by the gossip of her maid
Kept the swift pictures flashing through her brain
Of how the *Golden Hynde* was hauled ashore
At Deptford through a sea of exultation,
And by the Queen's command was now set up
For an everlasting memory!
Of how the Queen with subtle statecraft still
Kept Spain at arm's length, dangling, while she played
At fast and loose with France, whose embassy,
Arriving with the marriage treaty, found
(And trembled at her daring, since the wrath
Of Spain seemed, in their eyes, to flake with foam
The storm-beat hulk) a gorgeous banquet spread

To greet them on that very *Golden Hynde*
Which sacked the Spanish Main, a gorgeous feast,
The like of which old England had not seen
Since the bluff days of boisterous King Hal,
Great shields of brawn with mustard, roasted swans,
Haunches of venison, roasted chines of beef,
And chewets baked, big olive-pyes thereto,
And sallets mixed with sugar and cinnamon,
White wine, rose-water, and candied eringoes.
There, on the outlawed ship, whose very name
Rang like a blasphemy in the imperial ears
Of Spain (its every old worm-eaten plank
Being scored with scorn and courage that not storm
Nor death, nor all their Inquisition racks,
The white-hot irons and bloody branding whips
That scarred the back of Rome's pale galley-slaves,
Her captured English seamen, ever could daunt),
There with huge Empires waiting for one word,
One breath of colour and excuse, to leap
Like wolves at the naked throat of her small isle,
There in the eyes of the staggered world she stood,

Great Gloriana, while the live decks reeled
With flash of jewels and flush of rustling silks,
She stood with Drake, the corsair, and her people
Surged like a sea around. There did she give
Open defiance with her agate smile
To Spain. "Behold this pirate, now," she cried,
"Whose head my Lord, the Invincible, Philip of Spain
Demands from England. Kneel down, Master Drake,
Kneel down; for now have I this gilded sword
Wherewith to strike it off. Nay, thou my lord
Ambassador of France, since I be woman,
And squeamish at the sight of blood, give thou
The accolade. With that jest she gave the hilt
(Thus, even in boldness, playing a crafty part,
And dangling France before the adventurous deed)
To Marchaumont; and in the face of Europe,
With that huge fleet in Cadiz and the whole
World-power of Spain crouching around her isle,
Knighted the master-thief of the unknown world,
Sir Francis Drake.

And then the rumour came
Of vaster privateerings planned by Drake
Against the coasts of Philip; but held in check
And fretting at the leash, as ever the Queen
Clung to her state-craft, while Drake's enemies
Worked in the dark against him. Spain had set
An emperor's ransom on his life. At home
John Doughty, treacherous brother of that traitor
Who met his doom by Drake's own hand, intrigued
With Spain abroad and Spain's dark emissaries
At home to avenge his brother. Burleigh still
Beset Drake's path with pitfalls: treacherous greed
For Spain's blood-money daggered all the dark
Around him, and John Doughty without cease
Sought to make use of all; until, by chance,
Drake gat the proof of treasonable intrigue
With Spain, against him, up to the deadly hilt,
And hurled him into the Tower.

Many a night
She sat by that old casement nigh the sea
And heard its ebb and flow. With soul erect
And splendid now she waited, yet there came
No message; and, she thought, he hath seen at last

QUEEN ELIZABETH KNIGHTING DRAKE ON BOARD *The Golden Hind* AT DEPTFORD, APRIL 4, 1581

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My little worth. And when her maiden sang,
With white throat throbbing softly in the dusk
And fingers gently straying o'er the lute,
As was her wont at twilight, some old song
Of high disdainful queens and lovers pale
Pining a thousand years before their feet,
She thought, "Oh, if my lover loved me yet,
My heart would break for joy to welcome him:
Perchance his true pride will not let him come,
Since false pride barred him out"; and yet again
She burned with shame, thinking, "to him such pride
Were matter for a jest. Ah no, he hath seen
My little worth." Even so, one night she sat,
One dark rich summer night, thinking him far
Away, wrapped in the multitudinous cares
Of one that seemed the steersman of the State
Now, thro' the storm of Europe; while her maid
Sang to the lute, and soft sea-breezes brought
Wreathed scents and sighs of secret waves and flowers
Warm through the casement's muffling jasmine bloom.

Song

I

Nymphs and naiads, come away,—
Love lies dead!
Cover the cast-back golden head,
Cover the lovely limbs with may,
And with fairest boughs of green,
And many a rose-wreathed briar spray:
But let no hateful yew be seen
Where Love lies dead.

II

Let not the queen that would not hear,
(Love lies dead!)
Or beauty that refused to save,
Exult in one dejected tear;
But gather the glory of the year,
The pomp and glory of the year,
The triumphing glory of the year,
And softly, softly, softly shed
Its light and fragrance round the grave
Where Love lies dead.

The song ceased. Far away the great sea slept,
And all was very still. Only hard by
One bird-throat poured its passion through the gloom,
And the whole night seemed breathlessly listening,
As though earth's fairies, at the moon's command,
Had muffled all the flower-bells in the world,
That God might hear His nightingale.
A twig
Snapped, the song ceased, the intense dumb night was all
One passion of expectation—as if that song
Were prelude, and ere long the heavens and earth
Would burst into one great triumphant psalm.
The song ceased only as if that small bird-throat
Availed no further. Would the next great chord
Ring out from harps in flaming seraph hands
Ranged through the sky? The night watched, breathless, dumb.
Bess listened. Once again a dry twig snapped
Beneath her casement, and a face looked up,
Draining her face of blood, of sight, of life,
Whispering, a voice from far beyond the stars,

Whispering, unutterable joy, the whole
Glory of life and death in one small word—
Sweetheart!
The jasmine at her casement shook:
She knew no more than he was at her side;
His arms were round her, and his breath beat warm
Against her cheek.

. . . . .

Suddenly, nigh the house,
A deep-mouthed mastiff bayed and a foot crunched
The gravel. "Ah, hark! they are watching for thee," she cried.
He laughed: "There's half of Europe on the watch
Outside for my poor head. 'Tis cosier here
With thee; but now"—his face grew grave, he drew
A silken ladder from out his doublet—"quick,
Before yon good gamekeeper rounds the house
We must be down." And ere the words were out
Bess reached the path, and Drake was at her side.
Then into the star-stabbed shadow of the woods

They sped, his arm around her. Suddenly
She drew back with a cry, as four grim faces,
With hand to forelock, glimmered in their way.
Laughing she saw their storm-beat friendly smile
Welcome their doughty captain in this new
Adventure. Far away, once more they heard
The mastiff bay; then nearer, as if his nose
Were down upon the trail; and then a cry
As of a hot pursuit. They reached the brook,
Hurrying to the deep. Drake lifted Bess
In his arms, and down the watery bed they splashed
To baffle the clamouring hunt. Then out of the woods
They came, on the seaward side, and Bess, with a shiver,
Saw starlight flashing from bare cutlasses,
As the mastiff bayed still nearer. Swiftlier now
They passed along the bare blunt cliffs, and saw
The furrow ploughed by that strange cannon-shot
Which saved this hour for Bess; down to the beach
And starry foam that churned the silver gravel

Around an old black lurching boat, a strange
Grim Charon's wherry for two lovers' flight,
Guarded by old Tom Moone. Drake took her hand,
And with one arm around her waist, her breath
Warm on his cheek for a moment, in she stepped
Daintily o'er the gunwale and took her seat,
His throned princess, beside him at the helm,
Backed by the glittering waves, his throned princess,
With jewelled throat and glorious hair that seemed
Flashing back scents and colours to a sea
Which lived but to reflect her loveliness.

Then, all together, with their brandished oars
The seamen thrust as a heavy mounded wave
Lifted the boat; and up the flowering breast
Of the next they soared, then settled at the thwarts,
And the fierce water boiled before their blades,
While with Drake's iron hand upon the helm
They plunged and ploughed across the starlit seas

To where a small black lugger at anchor swung,
Dipping her rakish bows i' the liquid moon.
Small was she, but not fangless; for Bess saw,
With half a tremor, the dumb protective grin
Of four grim guns above the tossing boat.
But ere his seamen or his sweetheart knew
What power, as of a wind, bore them along,
Anchor was up, the sails were broken out,
And as they scudded down the dim grey coast
Of a new enchanted world (for now had Love
Made all things new and strange) the skilled musicians
Upraised, at Drake's command, a song to cheer
Their midnight path across that faery sea.

Song

I

Sweet, what is love? 'Tis not the crown of kings,
Nay, nor the fire of white seraphic wings!
Is it a child's heart leaping while he sings?
Even so say I;
Even so say I.

II

Love like a child around our world doth run,
Happy, happy, happy for all that God hath done,
Glad of all the little leaves dancing in the sun,
Even so say I;
Even so say I.

III

Sweet, what is love? 'Tis not the burning bliss
Angels know in heaven! God blows the world a kiss
Wakes on earth a wild-rose! 'Ah, who knows not this?
Even so say I;
Even so say I.

IV

Love, love is kind! Can it be far away,
Lost in a light that blinds our little day?
Seems it a great thing? Sweetheart, answer nay;
Even so say I;
Even so say I.

V

Sweet, what is love? The dust beneath our feet,
Whence breaks the rose and all the flowers that greet
April and May with lips and heart so sweet;
Even so say I;
Even so say I.

VI

Love is the dust whence Eden grew so fair,
Dust of the dust that set my lover there,
Ay, and wrought the gloriole of Eve's gold hair,
Even so say I;
Even so say I.

VII

Also the springing spray, the little topmost flower
Swung by the bird that sings a little hour,
Earth's climbing spray into the heaven's blue bower,
Even so say I;
Even so say I.

And stranger, ever stranger, grew the night
Around those twain, for whom the fleecy moon
Was but a mightier Cleopatra's pearl
Dissolving in the rich dark wine of night,
While 'mid the tenderer talk of eyes and hands
And whispered nothings, his imperial dreams
Rolled round their gloomy barge, robing its hulk
With splendours Rome and Egypt never knew.
Old ocean was his Nile, his mighty queen
An English maiden purer than the dawn,
His cause the cause of Freedom, his reward
The glory of England. Strangely simple, then,
Simple as life and death, anguish and love,
To Bess appeared those mighty dawning dreams,
Whereby he shaped the pageant of the world
To a new purpose, strangely simple all
Those great new waking tides i' the world's great soul
That set towards the fall of Spain and Rome
Behind a thunderous roar of ocean triumph
O'er burning ships and shattered fleets, while England
Grasped with sure hands the sceptre of the sea,

That untamed realm of Liberty which none
Had looked upon as aught but wilderness
Ere this, or even dreamed of as the seat
Of power and judgment and high sovereignty
Whereby all nations at the last should make
One brotherhood, and war should be no more.
And ever, as the vision broadened out,
The sense of some tremendous change at hand,
The approach of vast Armadas and the dawn
Of battle, reddening the diviner dawn
With clouds, confused it, till once more the song
Rang out triumphant o'er the glittering sea.

SONG

I

Ye that follow the vision
Of the world's weal afar,
Have ye met with derision
And the red laugh of war;
Yet the thunder shall not hurt you,
Nor the battle-storms dismay;
Tho' the sun in heaven desert you,
"Love will find out the way."

II

When the pulse of hope falters,
When the fire flickers low
On your faith's crumbling altars,
And the faithless gods go;
When the fond hope ye cherished
Cometh, kissing, to betray;
When the last star hath perished,
"Love will find out the way."

III

When the last dream bereaveth you,
And the heart turns to stone;
When the last comrade leaveth you
In the desert alone,
With the whole world before you
Clad in battle-array,
And the starless night o'er you,
"Love will find out the way."

IV

Your dreamers may dream it
The shadow of a dream,

Your sages may deem it
A bubble on the stream,—
Yet our kingdom draweth nigher
With each dawn and every day;
Through the earthquake and the fire
"Love will find out the way."

V

Love will find it, tho' the nations
Rise up blind, as of old,
And the new generations
Wage their warfares of gold;
Tho' they trample child and mother
As red clay into the clay,
Where brother wars with brother,
"Love will find out the way."

Dawn, ever bearing some divine increase
Of beauty, love, and wisdom round the world,
Dawn, like a wild-rose in the fields of heaven
Washed grey with dew, awoke, and found the barque
At anchor in a little land-locked bay.

A crisp breeze blew, and all the living sea
Beneath the flower-soft colours of the sky,
Now like a myriad-petalled rose and now
Innumerably scalloped into shells
Of rosy fire, with dwindling wrinkles edged
Fainter and fainter to the unruffled glow
And soft white pallor of the distant deep,
Shone with a mystic beauty for those twain
Who watched the gathering glory; and, in an hour,
Drake and sweet Bess, attended by a guard
Of four swart seamen, with bare cutlasses,
And by the faithful eyes of old Tom Moone,
Went up the rough rock-steps and twisted street
Oh, the small white sparkling seaport, tow'rds the church
Where, hand in hand, before God's altar they,
With steadfast eyes, did plight eternal troth,
And so were wedded. Never a chime of bells
Had they; but as they passed from out the porch
Between the sleeping graves, a skylark soared
Above the world in an ecstasy of song,
And, quivering heavenwards, lost himself in light.

BOOK IX

NOW like a white-cliffed fortress England shone
Amid the mirk of chaos; for the huge
Empire of Spain was but the dusky van
Of that dread night beyond all nights and days,
Night of the last corruption of a world
Fast-bound in misery and iron, with chains
Of priest and king and feudal servitude,
Night of the fettered flesh and ravaged soul,
Night of anarchic chaos, darkening the deep,
Swallowing up cities, kingdoms, empires, gods,
With vaster gloom approaching, till the sun
Of love was blackened, the moon of faith was blood.
All round our England, our small struggling star,
Fortress of freedom, rock o' the world's desire,
Bearing at last the hope of all mankind,
The thickening darkness surged, and close at hand

Those first fierce cloudy fringes of the storm,
The Armada sails, gathered their might; and Rome
Crouched close behind them with her screaming fires
And steaming shambles,—Rome, the hell-hag, crouched,
Still grasping with red hand the cross of Christ
By its great hilt, pointing it like a dagger,
Spear-head of the ultimate darkness, at the throat
Of England. Under Philip's feet at last
Writhed all the Protestant Netherlands, dim coasts
Right over against us, whence his panoplies
Might suddenly whelm our isle. But all night long,
On many a mountain, many a guardian height,
From Beachy Head to Skiddaw, little groups
Of seamen, torch and battle-lanthorn nigh,
Watched by the brooding unlit beacons, piled
Of furze and gorse, funereal peat, rough logs,
Reeking with oil, 'mid sharp scents of the sea,

Waste trampled grass and heather and close-
cropped thyme,
High o'er the thundering coast, among whose
rocks
Far, far below, the pacing coast-guards gazed
Steadfastly seaward through the loaded dusk.
And through that deepening gloom when, as it
seemed,
All England held her breath in one grim doubt,
Swift rumours flashed from North to South as
runs
The lightning round a silent thunder-cloud;
And there were muttering crowds i' the London
streets,
And hurrying feet i' the brooding Eastern ports.
All night, dark inns, gathering the country-side,
Reddened with clashing auguries of war.
All night, i' the ships of Plymouth Sound, the
soul
Of Francis Drake was England, and all night
Her singing seamen by the silver quays
Polished their guns and waited for the dawn.
But hour by hour that night grew deeper. Spain

Watched, cloud by cloud, her huge Armadas grow;
Watched, tower by tower and zone by zone, her fleets
Grapple the sky with a hundred hands and drag
Whole sea-horizons into her menacing ranks,
Joining her powers to the fierce night, while Philip
Still strove, with many a crafty word, to lull
The fears of Gloriana, till his plots
Were ripe, his armaments complete; and still
Great Gloriana took her woman's way,
Preferring ever tortuous intrigue
To battle, since the stakes had grown so great;
Now, more than ever, hoping against hope
To find some subtler means of victory;
Yet not without swift impulses to strike,
Swiftly recalled. Blind, yet not blind, she smiled
On Mary of Scotland waiting for her throne,—
A throne with many a strange dark tremour thrilled
Now as the rumoured murderous mines below
Converged towards it, mine and countermine,

Till the live earth was honeycombed with death.
Still with her agate smile, still she delayed,
Holding her pirate admiral in the leash,
Till Walsingham, nay, even the hunchback
Burleigh,
That crafty king of statesmen, seeing at last
The inevitable thunder-crash at hand,
Grew heart-sick with delay and ached to shatter
The tense tremendous hush that seemed to oppress
All hearts, compress all brows, load the broad
night
With more than mortal menace.
Only once
The night was traversed with one lightning flash,
One rapier stroke from England, at the heart
Of Spain, as swiftly parried, yet no less
A fiery challenge; for Philip's hate and scorn
Growing with his Armada's growth, he lured
With promises of just and friendly trade
A fleet of English corn-ships to relieve
His famine-stricken coast. There as they lay
Within his ports he seized them, one and all,
To fill the Armada's maw.

Whereat the Queen,
Passive so long, summoned great Walsingham,
And, still averse from open war, despite
The battle-hunger burning in his eyes,
With one strange swift sharp agate smile she hissed,
"Unchain *El Draque!*"
A lightning flash indeed
Was this; for he whose little *Golden Hynde*
With scarce a score of seamen late had scourged
The Spanish Main; he whose piratic neck
Scarcely the Queen's most wily statecraft saved
From Spain's revenge; he, privateer to the eyes
Of Spain, but England to all English hearts,
Gathered together, in all good jollity,
All help and furtherance himself could wish,
Before that moon was out, a pirate fleet
Whereof the like old ocean had not seen—
Eighteen swift cruisers, two great battleships,
With pinnaces and store-ships and a force
Of nigh three thousand men, wherewith to singe
The beard o' the King of Spain.
By night they gathered

PHILIP II, KING OF SPAIN

From the Painting by Titian

In marvellous wind-whipt inns nigh Plymouth Sound,
Not secretly as, ere the *Golden Hynde*
Burst thro' the West, that small adventurous crew
Gathered beside the Thames, tossing the phrase
"Pieces of eight" from mouth to mouth, and singing
Great songs of the rich Indies, and those tall
Enchanted galleons, red with blood and gold,
Superb with rubies, glorious as clouds,
Clouds i' the sun, with mighty press of sail
Dragging the sunset out of the unknown world,
And staining all the grey old seas of Time
With rich romance; but these, though privateers,
Or secret knights on Gloriana's quest,
Recked not if round the glowing magic door
Of every inn the townsfolk grouped to hear
The storm-scarred seamen toasting Francis Drake,
Nor heeded what blithe urchin faces pressed
On each red-curtained magic casement, bright
With wild reflection of the fires within,
The fires, the glasses and the singing lips
Lifting defiance to the powers of Spain.

Song

Sing we the Rose,
  The flower of flowers most glorious!
Never a storm that blows
  Across our English sea
But its heart breaks out wi' the Rose
  On England's flag victorious,
The triumphing flag that flows
  Thro' the heavens of Liberty.

Sing we the Rose,
  The flower of flowers most beautiful!
Until the world shall end
  She blossometh year by year,
Red with the blood that flows
  For England's sake, most dutiful,
Wherefore now we bend
  Our hearts and knees to her.

Sing we the Rose,
  The flower, the flower of war it is,
Where deep i' the midnight gloom

Its waves are the waves of the sea,
And the glare of battle grows,
And red over hulk and spar it is,
Till the grim black broadsides bloom
With our Rose of Victory.

Sing we the Rose,
The flower, the flower of love it is,
Which lovers aye shall sing
And nightingales proclaim;
For oh, the heaven that glows,
That glows and burns above it is
Freedom's perpetual Spring,
Our England's faithful fame.

Sing we the Rose,
That Eastward still shall spread for us
Upon the dawn's bright breast,
Red leaves wi' the foam impearled;
And onward ever flows
Till eventide make red for us
A Rose that sinks i' the West
And surges round the world;
Sing we the Rose!

One night as, with his great vice-admiral,
Frobisher, his rear-admiral, Francis Knollys,
And Thomas Fenner, his flag-captain, Drake
Took counsel at his tavern, there came a knock,
The door opened, and cold as from the sea
The gloom rushed in, and there against the night,
Clad as it seemed with wind and cloud and rain,
Glittered a courtier, whom by face and form
All knew for the age's brilliant paladin,
Sidney, the king of courtesy, a star
Of chivalry. The seamen stared at him,
Each with a hand upon the red-lined chart
Outspread before them. Then all stared at Drake,
Who crouched like a great bloodhound o'er the table,
And rose with a strange light burning in his eyes;
For he remembered how, three years agone,
That other courtier came, with words and smiles
Copied from Sidney's self; and in his ears
Rang once again the sound of the headsman's ax
Upon the desolate Patagonian shore
Beneath Magellan's gallows. With a voice

So harsh himself scarce knew it, he desired
This fair new courtier's errand. With grim eyes
He scanned the silken knight from head to foot,
While Sidney, smiling graciously, besought
Some place in their adventure. Drake's clenched fist
Crashed down on the old oak table like a rock,
Splintering the wood and dashing his rough wrist
With blood, as he thundered, "By the living God,
No! We've no room for courtiers, now! We leave
All that to Spain."

Whereat, seeing Sidney stood
Amazed, Drake, drawing nearer, said, "You ask
More than you dream: I know you for a knight
Most perfect and most gentle—yea, a man
Ready to die on any battle-field
To save a wounded friend" (even so said Drake,
Not knowing how indeed this knight would die,—
Yea, yield the cup of water from his lips
To save a wounded soldier, saying, "His need
Is greater!")

Drake outstretched his bleeding hand

And pointed through the door to where the gloom
Glimmered with bursting spray, and the thick night
Was all one wandering thunder of hidden seas
Rolling out of Eternity: "You'll find
No purple fields of Arcady out there,
No shepherds piping in those boisterous valleys,
No sheep among those roaring mountain-tops,
No lists of feudal chivalry. I've heard
That voice cry death to courtiers. 'Tis God's voice.
Take you the word of one who has occupied
His business in great waters. There's no room,
Meaning, or reason, office, or place, or name
For courtiers on the sea. Does the sea flatter?
You cannot bribe it, torture it, or tame it!
Its laws are those of the Juggernaut universe,
Remorseless—listen to that!"—a mighty wave
Broke thundering down the coast; "your hands are white,
Your rapier jewelled, can you grapple that?
What part have you in all its flaming ways?
What share in its fierce gloom? Has your heart broken

As those waves break out there? Can you lie
down
And sleep, as a lion-cub by the old lion,
When it shakes its mane out over you to hide you,
And leap out with the dawn as I have done?
These are big words; but, see, my hand is red:
You cannot torture me, I have borne all that;
And so I have some kinship with the sea,
Some sort of wild alliance with its storms.
Its exultations, ay, and its great wrath
At last, and power upon them. 'Tis the worse
For Spain. Be counselled well: come not between
My sea and its rich vengeance."
Silently,
Bowing his head, Sidney withdrew. But Drake,
So fiercely the old grief rankled in his heart,
Summoned his swiftest horseman, bidding him
ride,
Ride like the wind through the night, straight to
the Queen,
Praying she would most instantly recall
Her truant courtier. Nay, to make all sure,
Drake sent a gang of seamen out to crouch
Ambushed in woody hollows nigh the road,

Under the sailing moon, there to waylay
The Queen's reply, that she might never know
It reached him, if it proved against his will.

And swiftly came that truant's stern recall;
But Drake, in hourly dread of some new change
In Gloriana's mood, slept not by night
Or day, till out of roaring Plymouth Sound
The pirate fleet swept to the wind-swept main,
And took the wind and shook out all its sails.
Then with the unfettered sea he mixed his soul
In great rejoicing union, while the ships
Crashing and soaring o'er the heart-free waves
Drave ever straight for Spain.
Water and food
They lacked; but the fierce fever of his mind
To sail from Plymouth ere the Queen's will changed
Had left no time for these. Right on he drave,
Determining, though the Queen's old officers
Beneath him stood appalled, to take in stores
Of all he needed,—water, powder, food,—
By plunder of Spain herself. In Vigo Bay,

Close to Bayona town, under the cliffs
Of Spain's world-wide and thunder-fraught
prestige
He anchored, with the old sea-touch that wakes
Our England still. There, in the tingling ears
Of the world he cried, *En garde!* to the King of
Spain.
There, ordering out his pinnaces in force,
While a great storm, as if he held indeed
Heaven's batteries in reserve, growled o'er the sea,
He landed. Ere one cumbrous limb of all
The monstrous armaments of Spain could move
His ships were stored; and ere the sword of Spain
Stirred in its crusted sheath, Bayona town
Beheld an empty sea; for like a dream
The pirate fleet had vanished, none knew whither.
But, in its visible stead, invisible fear
Filled the vast rondure of the sea and sky
As with the omnipresent soul of Drake.
For when Spain saw the small black anchored fleet
Ride in her bays, the sight set bounds to fear.
She knew at least the ships were oak, the guns
Of common range: nor did she dream e'en Drake

Could sail two seas at once. Now all her coasts
Heard him all night in every bursting wave,
His topsails gleamed in every moonlit cloud;
His battle-lanthorns glittered in the stars
That hung the low horizon. He became
A universal menace; yet there followed
No sight or sound of him, unless the sea
Were that grim soul incarnate. Did it not roar
His great commands? The very spray that lashed
The cheeks of Spanish seamen lashed their
hearts
To helpless hatred of him. The wind sang
El Draque across the rattling blocks and sheets
When storms perplexed them; and when ships
went down,
As under the fury of his onsetting battle,
The drowning sailors cursed him while they sank.

Suddenly a rumour shook the Spanish Court:
He has gone once more to the Indies. Santa Cruz,
High Admiral of Spain, the most renowned
Captain in Europe, clamoured for a fleet
Of forty sail instantly to pursue.

For unto him whose little *Golden Hynde*
Was weapon enough, now leading such a squadron,
The West Indies, the whole Pacific coast,
And the whole Spanish Main, lay at his mercy.
And onward over the great grey gleaming sea
Swept like a thunder-cloud the pirate fleet
With vengeance in its heart. Five years agone,
Young Hawkins, in the Cape Verde Islands, met—
At Santiago—with such treachery
As Drake burned to requite, and from that hour
Was Santiago doomed. His chance had come;
Drake swooped upon it, plundered it, and was gone,
Leaving the treacherous isle a desolate heap
Of smoking ashes in the leaden sea,
While onward all those pirate bowsprits plunged
Into the golden West, across the broad
Atlantic once again; "For I will show,"
Said Drake, "that Englishmen henceforth will sail
Old ocean where they will." Onward they surged,
And the great glittering crested majestic waves
Jubilantly rushed up to meet the keels,

And there was nought around them but the grey
Ruin and roar of the huge Atlantic seas,
Grey mounded seas, pursuing and pursued,
That fly, hounded and hounding on for ever,
From empty marge to marge of the grey sky.
Over the wandering wilderness of foam,
Onward, through storm and death, Drake swept; for now
Once more a fell plague gripped the tossing ships,
And not by twos and threes as heretofore
His crews were minished; but in three black days
Three hundred seamen in their shotted shrouds
Were cast into the deep. Onward he swept,
Implacably, having in mind to strike
Spain in the throat at St. Domingo, port
Of Hispaniola, a city of far renown,
A jewel on the shores of old romance,
Palm-shadowed, gated with immortal gold,
Queen city of Spain's dominions over sea,
And guarded by great guns. Out of the dawn
The pirate ships came leaping, grim and black,
And ere the Spaniards were awake, the flag
Of England floated from their topmost tower.

But since he had not troops enough to hold
So great a city, Drake entrenched his men
Within the Plaza and held the batteries.
Thence he demanded ransom, and sent out
A boy with flag of truce. The boy's return
Drake waited long. Under a sheltering palm
He stood, watching the enemies' camp; and, lo!
Along the hot white purple-shadowed road
Tow'rds him, a crawling shape writhed through the dust
Up to his feet, a shape besmeared with blood—
A shape that held the stumps up of its wrists
And moaned, an eyeless thing: a naked rag
Of flesh obscenely mangled, a small face
Hideously puckered, shrivelled like a monkey's,
With lips drawn backward from its teeth.
"Speak, speak,
In God's name, speak, what art thou?" whispered Drake,
And a sharp cry came, answering his dread—
A cry as of a sea-bird in the wind
Desolately astray from all earth's shores:
"Captain, I am thy boy, only thy boy!

See, see, my captain: see what they have done!
Captain, I only bore the flag; I only——"

"O lad, lad, lad!" moaned Drake, and stooping strove
To pillow the mangled head upon his arm.
"What have they done to thee; what have they done?"
And at the touch, the boy screamed once and died.

Then like a savage sea with arms uplift
To heaven the wrath of Drake blazed thundering,
"Eternal God, be this the doom of Spain!
Henceforward have no pity. Send the strength
Of Thy great seas into my soul, that I
May devastate this empire—this red hell
They make of Thy good earth."
His men drew round,
Staring in horror at the silent shape
That daubed his feet. Like a cold wind
His words went through their flesh:
"This is the lad
That bore our flag of truce. This hath Spain done.

Look well upon it; draw the smoke of the blood
Up into your nostrils, my companions,
And down into your souls. This makes an end
For Spain! Bring forth the Spanish prisoners
And let me look on them."

Forth they were brought,
A swarthy gorgeous band of soldiers, priests,
And sailors, hedged between two sturdy files
Of British tars with naked cutlasses.
Close up to Drake they halted, under the palm,
Gay smiling prisoners, for they thought their friends
Had ransomed them. Then they looked up and met
A glance that swept athwart them like a sword,
Making the blood strain back from their blanched faces
Into their quivering hearts, with unknown dread,
As that accuser pointed to the shape
Before his feet.

"Dogs, will ye lap his blood
Before ye die? Make haste; for it grows cold!
Ye will not, will not even dabble your hands

In that red puddle of flesh, what? Are ye Spaniards?
Come, come, I'll look at you; perchance there's one
That's but a demi-devil and holds you back."
And with the word Drake stepped among their ranks
And read each face among the swarthy crew—
The gorgeous soldiers, ringleted sailors, priests
With rosary and cross, a slender page
In scarlet with a cloud of golden hair,
And two rope-girdled friars.
The slim page
Drake drew before the throng. "You are young," he said,
"Go; take this message to the camp of Spain:
Tell them I have a hunger in my soul
To look upon the murderers of this boy,
To see what eyes they have, what manner of mouths;
To touch them and to take their hands in mine,
And draw them close to me and smile upon them
Until they know my soul as I know theirs,
And they grovel in the dust and grope for mercy.

Say that, until I get them, every day
I'll hang two Spaniards, though I dispeople
The Spanish Main. Tell them that, every day,
I'll burn a portion of their city down,
Then find another city and burn that,
And then burn others till I burn away
Their empire from the world—ay, till I reach
The imperial throne of Philip with my fires,
And send it shrieking down to burn in hell
For ever. Go!"

Then Drake turned once again
To face the Spanish prisoners. With a voice
Cold as the passionless utterance of Fate
His grim command went forth. "Now, provost-marshal,
Begin with yon two friars, in whose faces
Chined like singed swine, and eyed with the spent coals
Of filthy living, sweats the glory of Rome
And Spain combined, strip off their leprous rags
And twist their ropes around their throats and hang them
High over the Spanish camp for all to see.
At dawn I'll choose two more."

BOOK X

ACROSS the Atlantic
Great rumours rushed as of a mighty wind,
The wind of the spirit of Drake. But who shall tell
In this cold age the power that he became
Who drew the universe within his soul
And moved with cosmic forces? Though the deep
Divided it from Drake, the gorgeous court
Of Philip shuddered away from the streaming coasts
As a wind-cuffed field of golden wheat. The King,
Bidding his guests to a feast in his own ship
On that wind-darkened sea, was made a mock,
As one by one his ladies proffered excuse
For fear of That beyond. Round Europe now
Ballad and story told how in the cabin
Of Francis Drake there hung a magic glass

Wherein he saw the fleets of all his enemies
And all that passed aboard them. Rome herself,
Perplexed that this proud heretic should prevail,
Fostered a darker dream that Drake had bought,
Like old Norse wizards, power to loose or bind
The winds at will.

And now a wilder tale
Flashed o'er the deep—of a distant blood-red dawn
O'er San Domingo, where the embattled troops
Of Spain and Drake were met—but not in war—
Met in the dawn, by his compelling will,
To offer up a sacrifice. Yea, there
Between the hosts, the hands of Spain herself
Slaughtered the Spanish murderers of the boy
Who had borne Drake's flag of truce; offered them up
As a blood-offering and an expiation,
Lest Drake, with that dread alchemy of his soul,
Should e'en transmute the dust beneath their feet
To one same substance with the place of pain
And whelm them suddenly in the eternal fires
Rumour on rumour rushed across the sea,
Large mockeries, and one most bitter of all,

Wormwood to Philip, of how Drake had stood
I' the governor's house at San Domingo, and seen
A mighty scutcheon of the King of Spain
Whereon was painted the terrestrial globe,
And on the globe a mighty steed in act
To spring into the heavens, and from its mouth
Streaming like smoke a scroll, and on the scroll
Three words of flame and fury—*Non sufficit*
Orbis—of how Drake and his seamen stood
Gazing upon it, and could not forbear
From summoning the Spaniards to expound
Its meaning, whereupon a hurricane roar
Of mirth burst from those bearded British lips,
And that immortal laughter shook the world.

So, while the imperial warrior eyes of Spain
Watched, every hour, her vast Armada grow
Readier to launch and shatter with one stroke
Our island's frail defence, fear gripped her still,
For there came sounds across the heaving sea
Of secret springs unsealed, forces unchained,
A mustering of deep elemental powers,
A sound as of the burgeoning of boughs

In universal April and dead hearts
Uprising from their tombs; a mighty cry
Of resurrection, surging through the souls
Of all mankind. For now the last wild tale
Swept like another dawn across the deep;
And, in that dawn, men saw the slaves of Spain,
The mutilated negroes of the mines,
With gaunt backs wealed and branded, scarred and seared
By whip and iron, in Spain's brute lust for gold,
Saw them, at Drake's great liberating word
Burst from their chains, erect, uplifting hands
Of rapture to the glad new light that then,
Then first, began to struggle thro' the clouds
And crown all manhood with a sacred crown
August—a light which, though from age to age
Clouds may obscure it, grows and still shall grow,
Until that Kingdom come, that grand Communion,
That Commonweal, that Empire, which still draws
Nigher with every hour, that Federation,
That turning of the wasteful strength of war
To accomplish large and fruitful tasks of peace,

That gathering up of one another's loads,
Whereby the weak are strengthened and the strong
Made stronger in the increasing good of all.
Then, suddenly, it seemed, as he had gone,
A ship came stealing into Plymouth Sound
And Drake was home again, but not to rest;
For scarce had he cast anchor ere the road
To London rang beneath the flying hoofs
That bore his brief despatch to Burleigh, saying—
"We have missed the Plate Fleet by but twelve
hours' sail,
The reason being best known to God. No less
We have given a cooling to the King of Spain.
There is a great gap opened which, methinks.
Is little to his liking. We have sacked
The towns of his chief Indies, burnt their ships,
Captured great store of gold and precious stones,
Three hundred pieces of artillery,
The more part brass. Our loss is heavy indeed,
Under the hand of God, eight hundred men,
Three parts of them by sickness. Captain Moone,
My trusty old companion, he that struck
The first blow in the South Seas at a Spaniard,

Died of a grievous wound at Cartagena.
My fleet and I are ready to strike again
At once, where'er the Queen and England please.
I pray for her commands, and those with speed,
That I may strike again." Outside the scroll
These words were writ once more—" My Queen's
commands
I much desire, your servant, Francis Drake."

This terse despatch the hunchback Burleigh read
Thrice over, with the broad cliff of his brow
Bending among his books. Thrice he assayed
To steel himself with caution as of old;
And thrice, as a glorious lightning running along
And flashing between those simple words, he saw
The great new power that lay at England's hand,
An ocean sovereignty—a power unknown
Before, but dawning now; a power that swept
All earth's old plots and counterplots away
Like straws; the germ of an unmeasured force
New-born, that laid the source of Spanish might
At England's mercy! Could that force but grow
Ere Spain should nip it, ere the mighty host

That waited in the Netherlands even now,
That host of thirty thousand men encamped
Round Antwerp, under Parma, should embark
Convoyed by that Invincible Armada
To leap at England's throat! Thrice he assayed
To think of England's helplessness, her ships
Little and few. Thrice he assayed to quench
With caution the high furnace of his soul
Which Drake had kindled. As he read the last
Rough simple plea, *I wait my Queen's commands,*
His deep eyes flashed with glorious tears.
He leapt
To his feet and cried aloud, "Before my God,
I am proud, I am very proud for England's sake!
This Drake is a terrible man to the King of Spain."

And still, still, Gloriana, brooding darkly
On Mary of Scotland's doom, who now at last
Was plucked from out her bosom like a snake
Hissing of war with France, a queenly snake,
A Lilith in whose lovely gleaming folds
And sexual bonds the judgment of mankind
Writhes even yet half-strangled, meting out

Wild execrations on the maiden Queen
Who quenched those jewelled eyes and mixt with dust
That white and crimson, who with cold sharp steel
In substance and in spirit, severed the neck
And straightened out those glittering supple coils
For ever; though for evermore will men
Lie subject to the unforgotten gleam
Of diamond eyes and cruel crimson mouth,
And curse the sword-bright intellect that struck
Like lightning far through Europe and the world
For England, when amid the embattled fury
Of world-wide empires, England stood alone.
Still she held back from war, still disavowed
The deeds of Drake to Spain; and yet once more
Philip, resolved at last never to swerve
By one digressive stroke, one ell or inch
From his own patient, sure, laborious path,
Accepted her suave plea, and with all speed
Pressed on his huge emprise until it seemed
His coasts groaned with grim bulks of cannonry,
Thick loaded hulks of thunder and towers of doom;

And, all round Antwerp, Parma still prepared
To hurl such armies o'er the rolling sea
As in all history hardly the earth herself
Felt shake with terror her own green hills and plains.
I wait my Queen's commands! Despite the plea
Urged every hour upon her with the fire
That burned for action in the soul of Drake.
Still she delayed, till on one darkling eve
She gave him audience in that glimmering room
Where first he saw her. Strangely sounded there
The seaman's rough strong passion as he poured
His heart before her, pleading—"Every hour
Is one more victory lost," and only heard
The bitter answer—"Nay, but every hour
Is a breath snatched from the unconquerable
Doom, that awaits us if we are forced to war.
Yea, and who knows?—though Spain may forge a sword,
Its point is not inevitably bared
Against the breast of England!" As she spake,
The winds without clamoured with clash of bells,
There was a gleam of torches and a roar—

Mary, the traitress of the North, is dead.
God save the Queen!

Her head bent down: she wept.
"Pity me, friend, though I be queen, O yet
My heart is woman, and I am sore pressed
On every side,—Scotland and France and Spain
Beset me, and I know not where to turn."
Even as she spake, there came a hurried step
Into that dim, rich chamber. Walsingham
Stood there, before her, without ceremony
Thrusting a letter forth: "At last," he cried,
"Your Majesty may read the full intent
Of Spain and Rome. Here, plainly written out
Upon this paper, worth your kingdom's crown,
This letter, stolen by a trusty spy,
Out of the inmost chamber of the Pope
Sixtus himself, here is your murder planned:
Blame not your Ministers, who with such haste
Plucked out this viper, Mary, from your breast!
Read here—how, with his thirty thousand men,
The pick of Europe, Parma joins the Scots,
While Ireland, grasped in their Armada's clutch,
And the Isle of Wight, against our west and south

Become their base."

"Rome, Rome, and Rome again,
And always Rome," she muttered; "even here
In England hath she thousands yet. She hath struck
Her curse out with pontific finger at me,
Cursed me down and away to the bottomless pit.
Her shadow like the shadow of clouds or sails,
The shadow of that huge event at hand,
Darkens the seas already, and the wind
Is on my cheek that shakes my kingdom down.
She hath thousands here in England, born and bred
Englishmen. They will stand by Rome!"

"'Fore God,"
Cried Walsingham, "my Queen, you do them wrong!
There is another Rome—not this that lurks
And lies and plucks the world back into darkness,
And stabs it there for gold. There is a City
Whose eyes are tow'rd the morning; on whose heights
Blazes the Cross of Christ above the world;
A Rome that shall wage warfare yet for God

In the dark days to come—a Rome whose thought
Shall march with our humanity and be proud
To cast old creeds like seed into the ground,
Watch the strange shoots and foster the new flower
Of faiths we know not yet. Is this a dream?
I speak as one by knighthood bound to speak;
For even this day—and my heart burns with it—
I heard the Catholic gentlemen of England
Speaking in grave assembly. At one breath
Of peril to our island, why, their swords
Leapt from their scabbards, and their cry went up
To split the heavens—*God save our English Queen!*"
Even as he spake there passed the rushing gleam
Of torches once again, and as they stood
Silently listening, all the winds ran wild
With clamouring bells, and a great cry went up—
God save Elizabeth, our English Queen!

"I'll vouch for some two hundred Catholic throats
Among that thousand," whispered Walsingham
Eagerly, with his eyes on the Queen's face.
Then, seeing it brighten, fervently he cried,

Pressing the swift advantage home, "O Madam,
The heart of England now is all on fire!
We are one people, as we never have been
In all our history, all prepared to die
Around your throne. Madam, you are beloved
As never yet was English king or queen!"
She looked at him, the tears in her keen eyes
Glittered—"And I am very proud," she said,
"But if our enemies command the world,
And we have one small island and no more . . ."
She ceased; and Drake, in a strange voice, hoarse
and low,
Trembling with passion deeper than all speech,
Cried out—"No more than the great ocean sea
Which makes the enemies' coast our frontier now;
No more than that great Empire of the deep
Which rolls from Pole to Pole, washing the world
With thunder, that great Empire whose command
This day is yours to take. Hear me, my Queen,
This is a dream, a new dream, but a true;
For mightier days are dawning on the world
Than heart of man hath known. If England hold
The sea, she holds the hundred thousand gates

That open to futurity. She holds
The highway of all ages. Argosies
Of unknown glory set their sails this day
For England out of ports beyond the stars.
Ay, on the sacred seas we ne'er shall know
They hoist their sails this day by peaceful quays,
Great gleaming wharves i' the perfect City of God,
If she but claim her heritage."

He ceased;
And the deep dream of that new realm, the sea,
Through all the soul of Gloriana surged
A moment; then, with splendid eyes that filled
With fire of sunsets far away, she cried
(Faith making her a child, yet queenlier still),
"Yea, claim it thou for me!"

A moment there
Trembling she stood. Then, once again, there passed
A rush of torches through the gloom without,
And a great cry *"God save Elizabeth,*
God save our English Queen!"

"Yea go, then, go,"

She said, " God speed you now, Sir Francis Drake,
Not as a privateer, but with full powers,
My Admiral-at-the-Seas ! "
Without a word
Drake bent above her hand and, ere she knew it,
His eyes from the dark doorway flashed farewell,
And he was gone. But ere he leapt to saddle
Walsingham stood at his stirrup, muttering " Ride,
Ride now like hell to Plymouth; for the Queen
Is hard beset, and ere ye are out at sea
Her mood will change. The friends of Spain will move
Earth and the heavens for your recall. They'll tempt her
With their false baits of peace, though I shall stand
Here at your back through thick and thin,—farewell ! "
Fire flashed beneath the hoofs, and Drake was gone.

Scarce had he vanished in the night than doubt
Once more assailed the Queen. The death of Mary

Had brought e'en France against her. Walsingham,
And Burleigh himself, prime mover of that death,
Being held in much disfavour for it, stood
As helpless. Long ere Drake or human power,
They thought, could put to sea, a courier sped
To Plymouth bidding Drake forbear to strike
At Spain, but keep to the high seas, and, lo!
The roadstead glittered empty. Drake was gone!

Gone! Though the friends of Spain had poured their gold
To thin his ranks, and every hour his crews
Deserted, he had laughed—"Let Spain buy scum!
Next to an honest seaman I love best
An honest landsman. What more goodly task
Than teaching brave men seamanship?" He had filled
His ships with soldiers! Out in the teeth of the gale
That raged against him he had driven. In vain,
Amid the boisterous laughter of the quays,
A pinnace dashed in hot pursuit, and met

A roaring breaker and came hurtling back
With oars and spars all trailing in the foam,
A tangled mass of wreckage and despair.
Sky swept to stormy sky: no sail could live
In that great yeast of waves; but Drake was gone!

Then, once again, across the rolling sea
Great rumours rushed of how he had sacked the port
Of Cadiz and had swept along the coast
To Lisbon, where the whole Armada lay,
Had snapped up prizes under its very nose,
And taunted Santa Cruz, High Admiral
Of Spain, striving to draw him out for fight,
And offering, if his course should lie that way,
To convoy him to Britain, taunted him
So bitterly that for once, in the world's eyes
A jest had power to kill; for Santa Cruz
Died with the spleen of it, since he could not move
Before the appointed season. Then there came
Flying back home, the Queen's old Admiral
Borough, deserting Drake, and all aghast
At Drake's temerity: "For," he said, "this man,

Thrust o'er my head, against all precedent,
Bade me follow him into harbour mouths
A-flame with cannon like the jaws of death,
Whereat I much demurred; and straightway Drake
Clapped me in irons, me—an officer
And Admiral of the Queen; and, though my voice
Was all against it, plunged into the pit
Without me, left me with some word that burns
And rankles in me still, making me fear
The man was mad, some word of lonely seas
A desert island and a mutineer
And dead Magellan's gallows. Sirs, my life
Was hardly safe with him. Why, he resolved
To storm the Castle of St. Vincent, sirs,
A castle on a cliff, grinning with guns,
Well-known impregnable! The Spaniards fear
Drake; but to see him land below it and bid
Surrender, sirs, the strongest fort of Spain
Without a blow, they laughed! And straightway he,
With all the fury of Satan, turned that cliff
To hell itself. He sent down to the ships

For faggots, broken oars, beams, bowsprits, masts,
And piled them up against the outer gates,
Higher and higher, and fired them. There he
stood
Amid the smoke and flame and cannon-shot,
This Admiral, like a common seaman, black
With soot, besmeared with blood, his naked arms
Full of great faggots, labouring like a giant
And roaring like Apollyon. Sirs, he is mad!
But did he take it, say you? Yea, he took it,
The mightiest stronghold on the coast of Spain,
Took it and tumbled all its big brass guns
Clattering over the cliffs into the sea.
But, sirs, ye need not raise a cheer so loud!
It is not warfare. 'Twas a madman's trick,
A devil's!"

Then the rumour of a storm
That scattered the fleet of Drake to the four winds
Disturbed the heart of England, as his ships
Came straggling into harbour, one by one,
Saying they could not find him. Then, at last,
When the storm burst in its earth-shaking might
Along our coasts, one night of rolling gloom

His cannon woke old Plymouth. In he came
Across the thunder and lightning of the sea
With his grim ship of war, and close behind
A shadow like a mountain or a cloud
Torn from the heaven-high panoplies of Spain,
A captured galleon loomed, and round her prow
A blazoned scroll, whence (as she neared the quays
Which many a lanthorn swung from brawny fist
Yellowed) the sudden crimson of her name
San Filippe flashed o'er the white sea of faces,
And a rending shout went skyward that outroared
The blanching breakers—"'Tis the heart of Spain!
The great *San Filippe!*" Overhead she towered,
The mightiest ship afloat; and in her hold
The riches of a continent, a prize
Greater than earth had ever known; for there
Not only ruby and pearl like ocean beaches
Heaped on some wizard coast in that dim hull
Blazed to the lanthorn light; not only gold
Gleamed, though of gold a million would not buy
Her store; but in her cabin lay the charts
And secrets of the wild unwhispered wealth

Of India—secrets that splashed London wharves
With coloured dreams and made her misty streets
Flame like an Eastern City when the sun
Shatters itself on jewelled domes and spills
Its crimson wreckage thro' the silvery palms.
And of those dreams the far East India quest
Began: the first foundation-stone was laid
Of our great Indian Empire, and a star
Began to tremble on the brows of England
That Time can never darken.

But now the seas
Darkened indeed with menace; now at last
The cold wind of the black approaching wings
Of Azrael crept across the deep: the storm
Throbbed with their thunderous pulse, and ere that moon
Waned, a swift gunboat foamed into the Sound
With word that all the Invincible Armada
Was hoisting sail for England.

Even now,
Elizabeth, torn a thousand ways, withheld
The word for which Drake pleaded as for life,

That he might meet them ere they left their coasts,
Meet them or ever they reached the Channel, meet them
Now, or—"Too late! too late!" At last his voice
Beat down e'en those that blindly dinned her ears
With chatter of meeting Spain on British soil;
And swiftly she commanded (seeing once more
The light that burned amid the approaching gloom
In Drake's deep eyes) Lord Howard of Effingham,
High Admiral of England, straight to join him
At Plymouth Sound. "How many ships are wanted?"
She asked him, thinking "we are few, indeed!"
"Give me but sixteen merchantmen," he said,
"And but four battleships, by the mercy of God,
I'll answer for the Armada!" Out to sea
They swept, in the teeth of a gale; but vainly Drake
Strove to impart the thought wherewith his mind
Travailed—to win command of the ocean sea
By bursting on the fleets of Spain at once

Even as they left their ports, not as of old
To hover in a vain dream of defence
Round fifty threatened points of British coast,
But Howard, clinging to his old-world order,
Flung out his ships in a loose, long, straggling line
Across the Channel, waiting, wary, alert,
But powerless thus as a string of scattered sea-gulls
Beating against the storm. Then, flying to meet
them,
A merchantman brought terror down the wind,
With news that she had seen that monstrous host
Stretching from sky to sky, great hulks of doom,
Dragging death's midnight with them o'er the sea
Tow'rds England. Up to Howard's flag-ship
Drake
In his immortal battle-ship—*Revenge,*
Rushed thro' the foam, and thro' the swirling seas
His pinnace dashed alongside. On to the decks
O' the tossing flag-ship, like a very Viking
Shaking the surf and rainbows of the spray
From sun-smit lion-like mane and beard he stood
Before Lord Howard in the escutcheoned poop
And poured his heart out like the rending sea

In passionate wave on wave:

"If yonder fleet
Once reach the Channel, hardly the mercy of God
Saves England! I would pray with my last breath,
Let us beat up to windward of them now,
And handle them before they reach the Channel."
"Nay; but we cannot bare the coast," cried Howard,
"Nor have we stores of powder or food enough!"
"My lord," said Drake, with his great arm outstretched,
"There is food enough in yonder enemy's ships,
And powder enough and cannon-shot enough!
We must revictual there. Look! look!" he cried,
And pointed to the heavens. As for a soul
That by sheer force of will compels the world
To work his bidding, so it seemed the wind
That blew against them slowly veered. The sails
Quivered, the skies revolved. A northerly breeze
Awoke, and now, behind the British ships,
Blew steadily tow'rds the unseen host of Spain.
"It is the breath of God," cried Drake, "they lie

Wind-bound, and we may work our will with
them.
Signal the word, Lord Howard, and drive down!"
And as a man convinced by Heaven itself
Lord Howard ordered, straightway, the whole
fleet
To advance.
And now, indeed, as Drake foresaw,
The Armada lay, beyond the dim horizon,
Wind-bound and helpless in Corunna Bay,
At England's mercy, could her fleet but draw
Nigh enough, with its fire-ships and great guns
To windward. Nearer, nearer league by league
The ships of England came; till Ushant lay
Some seventy leagues behind. Then, yet once
more
The wind veered, straight against them. To
remain
Beating against it idly was to starve:
And, as a man whose power upon the world
Fails for one moment of exhausted will,
Drake, gathering up his forces as he went
For one more supreme effort, turned his ship

Tow'rds Plymouth, and retreated with the rest.

There, while the ships refitted with all haste
And ax and hammer rang, one golden eve
Just as the setting sun began to fringe
The clouds with crimson, and the creaming waves
Were one wild riot of fairy rainbows, Drake
Stood with old comrades on the close-cropped green
Of Plymouth Hoe, playing a game of bowls.
Far off unseen, a little barque, full-sail,
Struggled and leapt and strove tow'rds Plymouth Sound,
Noteless as any speckled herring-gull
Flickering between the white flakes of the waves.
A group of schoolboys with their satchels lay
Stretched on the green, gazing with great wide eyes
Upon their seamen heroes, as like gods
Disporting with the battles of the world
They loomed, tossing black bowls like cannon-balls
Against the rosy West, or lounged at ease
With faces olive-dark against that sky

Laughing, while from the neighbouring inn mine
host,
White-aproned and blue-jerkined, hurried out
With foaming cups of sack, and they drank deep,
Tossing their heads back under the golden clouds
And burying their bearded lips. The hues
That slashed their doublets, for the boys' bright
eyes
(Even as the gleams of Grecian cloud or moon
Revealed the old gods) were here rich dusky
streaks
Of splendour from the Spanish Main, that shone
But to proclaim these heroes. There a boy
More bold crept nearer to a slouched hat thrown
Upon the green, and touched the silver plume,
And felt as if he had touched a sunset-isle
Of feathery palms beyond a crimson sea.
Another stared at the blue rings of smoke
A storm-scarred seaman puffed from a long pipe
Primed with the strange new herb they had lately
found
In far Virginia. But the little ship
Now plunging into Plymouth Bay none saw.

E'en when she had anchored and her straining
boat
Had touched the land, and the boat's crew over
the quays
Leapt with a shout, scarce was there one to heed.
A seaman, smiling, swaggered out of the inn
Swinging in one brown hand a gleaming cage
Wherein a big green parrot chattered and clung
Fluttering against the wires. A troop of girls
With arms linked paused to watch the game of
bowls;
And now they flocked around the cage, while one
With rosy finger tempted the horny beak
To bite. Close overhead a sea-mew flashed
Seaward. Once, from an open window, soft
Through trellised leaves, not far away, a voice
Floated—a voice that flushed the cheek of Drake,
The voice of Bess, bending her glossy head
Over the broidery frame, in a quiet song.
The song ceased. Still, with rainbows in their
eyes,
The schoolboys watched the bowls like cannon-
balls

Roll from the hand of gods along the turf.
Suddenly, tow'rds the green, a little cloud
Of seamen, shouting, stumbling, as they ran
Drew all eyes on them. The game ceased. A voice
Rough with the storms of many an ocean roared,
"Drake! Cap'en Drake! The Armada!
They are in the Channel! We sighted them—
A line of battle-ships! We could not see
An end of them. They stretch from east to west
Like a great storm of clouds, glinting with guns,
From sky to sky!"
So, after all his strife,
The wasted weeks had tripped him, the fierce hours
Of pleading for the sea's command, great hours
And golden moments, all were lost. The fleet
Of Spain had won the Channel without a blow.
All eyes were turned on Drake, as he stood there
A giant against the sunset and the sea
Looming, alone. Far off, the first white star
Gleamed in a rosy space of heaven. He tossed
A grim black ball i' the lustrous air and laughed,—
"Come, lads," he said, "we've time to finish the game!"

BOOK XI

FEW minutes, and well wasted those, were spent
On that great game of bowls; for well knew Drake
What panic threatened Plymouth, since his fleet
Lay trapped there by the black headwind that blew
Straight up the Sound, and Plymouth town itself,
Except the ships won seaward ere the dawn,
Lay at the Armada's mercy. Never a seaman
Of all the sea-dogs clustered on the quays,
And all the captains clamouring round Lord Howard,
Hoped that one ship might win to the open sea:
At dawn, they thought, the Armada's rolling guns
To windward, in an hour, must shatter them,
Huddled in their red slaughter-house like sheep.

Now was the great sun sunken and the night

Dark. Far to Westward, like the soul of man
Fighting blind nature, a wild flare of red
Upon some windy headland suddenly leapt
And vanished flickering into the clouds. Again
It leapt and vanished: then all at once it streamed
Steadily as a crimson torch upheld
By Titan hands to heaven. It was the first
Beacon! A sudden silence swept along
The seething quays, and in their midst appeared
Drake.
Then the jubilant thunder of his voice
Rolled, buffeting the sea-wind far and nigh,
And ere they knew what power as of a sea
Surged through them, his immortal battle-ship
Revenge had flung out cables to the quays,
And while the seamen, as he had commanded,
Knotted thick ropes together, he stood apart
(For well he knew what panic threatened still)
Whittling idly at a scrap of wood,
And carved a little boat out for the child
Of some old sea companion.
So great and calm a master of the world
Seemed Drake that, as he whittled, and the chips

Fluttered into the blackness over the quay,
Men said that in this hour of England's need
Each tiny flake turned to a battle-ship;
For now began the lanthorns, one by one,
To glitter, and half-reveal the shadowy hulks
Before him.—So the huge old legend grew,
Not all unworthy the Homeric age
Of gods and godlike men.

St. Michael's Mount,
Answering the first wild beacon far away,
Rolled crimson thunders to the stormy sky!
The ropes were knotted. Through the panting dark
Great heaving lines of seamen all together
Hauled with a shout, and all together again
Hauled with a shout against the roaring wind;
And slowly, slowly, onward tow'rds the sea
Moved the *Revenge,* and seaward ever heaved
The brawny backs together, and in their midst,
Suddenly, as they slackened, Drake was there
Hauling like any ten, and with his heart
Doubling the strength of all, giving them joy
Of battle against those odds,—Ay, till they found

Delight i' the burning tingle of the blood
That even their hardy hands must feel besmear
The harsh, rough, straining ropes. There as they toiled,
Answering a score of hills, old Beachy Head
Streamed like a furnace to the rolling clouds.
Then all around the coast each windy ness
And craggy mountain kindled. Peak from peak
Caught the tremendous fire, and passed it on
Round the bluff East and the black mouth of Thames,—
Ay, Northward to the waste wild Yorkshire fells
And gloomy Cumberland, where, like a giant,
Great Skiddaw grasped the red tempestuous brand,
And thrust it up against the reeling heavens.
Then all night long, inland, the wandering winds
Ran wild with clamour and clash of startled bells;
All night the cities seethed with torches, flashed
With twenty thousand flames of burnished steel;
While over the trample and thunder of hooves blazed forth
The lightning of wild trumpets. Lonely lanes
Of country darkness, lit by cottage doors
Entwined with rose and honeysuckle, roared

Like mountain torrents now—East, West, and South,
As to the coasts with pike and musket streamed
The trained bands, horse and foot, from every town
And every hamlet. All the shaggy hills
From Milford Haven to the Downs of Kent,
And up to Humber, gleamed with many a hedge
Of pikes between the beacon's crimson glares;
While in red London forty thousand men,
In case the invader should prevail, drew swords
Around their Queen. All night in dark St. Paul's,
While round it rolled a multitudinous roar
As of the Atlantic on a Western beach,
And all the leaning London streets were lit
With fury of torches, rose the passionate prayer
Of England's peril:

O Lord God of Hosts,
Let Thine enemies know that Thou hast taken
England into Thine hands!

The mighty sound
Rolled, billowing round the kneeling aisles, then died,
Echoing up the heights. A voice, far off,

As on the cross of Calvary, caught it up
And poured the prayer o'er that deep hush, alone:
We beseech thee, O God, to go before our armies,
Bless and prosper them both by land and sea!
Grant unto them Thy victory, O God,
As thou usedst to do to Thy children when they please Thee!
All power, all strength, all victory come from Thee!
Then from the lips of all those thousands burst
A sound as from the rent heart of an ocean,
One tumult, one great rushing storm of wings
Cleaving the darkness round the Gates of Heaven:
Some put their trust in chariots and some in horses;
But we will remember Thy name, O Lord, our God!

So, while at Plymouth Sound her seamen toiled
All through the night, and scarce a ship had won
Seaward, the heart of England cried to God.
All night, while trumpets yelled and blared without,
And signal cannon shook the blazoned panes,

And billowing multitudes went thundering by,
Amid that solemn pillared hush arose
From lips of kneeling thousands one great prayer
Storming the Gates of Heaven! *O Lord, our God,*
Heavenly Father, have mercy upon our Queen,
To whom Thy far dispersèd flock do fly
In the anguish of their souls. Behold, behold,
How many princes band themselves against her,
How long Thy servant hath laboured to them for peace,
How proudly they prepare themselves for battle!
Arise, therefore! Maintain Thine own cause,
Judge Thou between her and her enemies!
She seeketh not her own honour, but Thine,
Not the dominions of others, but Thy truth,
Not bloodshed, but the saving of the afflicted!
Oh, rend the heavens, therefore, and come down,
Deliver Thy people!
To vanquish is all one with Thee, by few
Or many, want or wealth, weakness or strength.
The cause is Thine, the enemies Thine, the afflicted
Thine! The honour, victory, and triumph

Thine! Grant her people now one heart, one mind,
One strength. Give unto her councils and her captains
Wisdom and courage strongly to withstand
The forces of her enemies, that the fame
And glory of Thy Kingdom may be spread
Unto the ends of the world. Father, we crave
This in Thy mercy, for the precious death
Of Thy dear Son, our Saviour, Jesus Christ!
Amen.
And as the dreadful dawn thro' mist-wreaths broke,
And out of Plymouth Sound at last, with cheers
Ringing from many a thousand throats, there struggled
Six little ships, all that the night's long toil
Had warped down to the sea (but leading them
The ship of Drake) there rose one ocean cry
From all those worshippers—*Let God arise,*
And let His enemies be scattered!

Under the leaden fogs of that new dawn,

Empty and cold, indifferent as death,
The sea heaved strangely to the seamen's eyes,
Seeing all round them only the leaden surge
Wrapped in wet mists or flashing here and there
With crumbling white. Against the cold wet wind
Westward the little ships of England beat
With short tacks, close inshore, striving to win
The windward station of the threatening battle
That neared behind the veil. Six little ships,
No more, beat Westward, even as all mankind
Beats up against that universal wind
Whereon like withered leaves all else is blown
Down one wide way to death: the soul alone,
Whether at last it wins, or faints and fails,
Stems the dark tide with its intrepid sails.
Close-hauled, with many a short tack, struggled and strained,
Northwest, Southwest, the ships; but ever Westward gained
Some little way with every tack; and soon,
While the prows plunged beneath the grey-gold noon,
Lapped by the crackling waves, even as the wind

Died down a little, in the mists behind
Stole out from Plymouth Sound the struggling score
Of ships that might not win last night to sea.
They followed; but the Six went on before,
Not knowing, alone, for God and Liberty.

Now, as they tacked Northwest, the sullen roar
Of reefs crept out, or some strange bleating sound
Of sheep upon the hills. Southwest once more
The bo'sun's whistle swung their bowsprits round;

Southwest until the long low lapping splash
Was all they heard of keels that still ran out
Seaward, then with one muffled heave and crash
Once more the whistles brought their sails about.

And now the noon began to wane; the West
With slow rich colours filled and shadowy forms,
Dark curdling wreaths and fogs with crimsoned breast,
And tangled zones of dusk like frozen storms,

Motionless, flagged with sunset, hulled with doom!
Motionless? Nay, across the darkening deep

Surely the whole sky moved its gorgeous gloom
  Onward; and like the curtains of a sleep

The red fogs crumbled, mists dissolved away!
  There, like death's secret dawning thro' a dream,
Great thrones of thunder dusked the dying day,
  And, higher, pale towers of cloud began to gleam.

There, in one heaven-wide storm, great masts and clouds
  Of sail crept slowly forth, the ships of Spain!
From North to South, their tangled spars and shrouds
  Controlled the slow wind as with bit and rein;
Onward they rode in insolent disdain
  Sighting the little fleet of England there,
While o'er the sullen splendour of the main
  Three solemn guns tolled all their host to prayer,
And their great ensign blazoned all the doom-fraught
    air.

The sacred standard of their proud crusade
  Up to the mast-head of their flag-ship soared:
On one side knelt the Holy Mother-maid,
  On one the crucified Redeemer poured
His blood, and all their kneeling hosts adored

Their saints, and clouds of incense heavenward
streamed,
While pomp of cannonry and pike and sword
Down long sea-lanes of mocking menace gleamed,
And chant of priests rolled out o'er seas that darkly
dreamed.

Who comes to fight for England? Is it ye,
Six little straws that dance upon the foam?
Ay, sweeping o'er the sunset-crimsoned sea
Let the proud pageant in its glory come,
Leaving the sunset like a hecatomb
Of souls whose bodies yet endure the chain!
Let slaves, by thousands, branded, scarred and dumb,
In those dark galleys grip their oars again,
And o'er the rolling deep bring on the pomp of Spain;—

Bring on the pomp of royal paladins
(For all the princedoms of the land are there!)
And for the gorgeous purple of their sins
The papal pomp bring on with psalm and prayer:
Nearer the splendour heaves; can ye not hear
The rushing foam, not see the blazoned arms,
And black-faced hosts thro' leagues of golden air

Crowding the decks, muttering their beads and charms
To where, in furthest heaven, they thicken like locust-swarms?

Bring on the pomp and pride of old Castile,
Blazon the skies with royal Aragon,
Beneath Oquendo let old ocean reel,
The purple pomp of priestly Rome bring on;
And let her censers dusk the dying sun,
The thunder of her banners on the breeze
Following Sidonia's glorious galleon
Deride the sleeping thunder of the seas,
While twenty thousand warriors chant her litanies.

Lo, all their decks are kneeling! Sky to sky
Responds! It is their solemn evening hour.
SALVE REGINA, though the daylight die,
SALVE REGINA, though the darkness lour;
Have they not still the kingdom and the power?
SALVE REGINA, hark, their thousands cry,
From where like clouds to where like mountains tower
Their crowded galleons looming far or nigh,
SALVE REGINA, hark, what distant seas reply!

What distant seas, what distant ages hear?
Bring on the pomp! the sun of Spain goes down:
The moon but swells the tide of praise and prayer;
Bring on the world-wide pomp of her renown;
Let darkness crown her with a starrier crown,
And let her watch the fierce waves crouch and fawn
Round those huge hulks from which her cannon frown,
While close inshore the wet sea-mists are drawn
Round England's Drake: then wait, in triumph, for the dawn.

The sun of Rome goes down; the night is dark!
Still are her thousands praying, still their cry
Ascends from the wide waste of waters, hark!
Ave Maria, darker grows the sky!
Ave Maria, *those about to die*
Salute thee! Nay, what wandering winds blaspheme
With random gusts of chilling prophecy
Against the solemn sounds that heavenward stream!
The night is come at last. Break not the splendid dream.

But through the misty darkness, close inshore,
Northwest, Southwest, and ever Westward strained

The little ships of England, all night long,
As down the coast the reddening beacons leapt,
The crackle and lapping splash of tacking keels,
The bo'sun's low sharp whistles and the whine
Of ropes, mixing with many a sea-bird's cry
Disturbed the darkness, waking vague swift fears
Among the mighty hulks of Spain that lay
Nearest, then fading through the mists inshore
Northwest, then growing again, but farther down
Their ranks to Westward with each dark return
And dark departure, till the rearmost rank
Of grim sea-castles heard the swish and creak
Pass plashing seaward thro' the wet sea-mists
To windward now of all that monstrous host,
Then heard no more than wandering sea-birds' cries
Wheeling around their leagues of lanthorn-light,
Or heave of waters, waiting for the dawn.

Dawn, everlasting and almighty dawn
Rolled o'er the waters, the grey mists were fled:
See, in their reeking heaven-wide crescent drawn
Those masts and spars and cloudy sails, outspread

Like one great sulphurous tempest soaked with red,
In vain withstand the march of brightening skies:
The dawn sweeps onward and the night is dead,
And, lo! to windward, what bright menace lies,
What glory kindles now in England's wakening eyes?

There, on the glittering plains of open sea,
To windward now, behind the fleets of Spain,
Two little files of ships are tossing free,
Free of the winds and of the wind-swept main:
Were they not trapped? Who brought them forth again,
Free of the great new fields of England's war,
With sails like blossoms shining after rain,
And guns that sparkle to the morning star?
Drake!—first upon the deep that rolls to Trafalgar!

And Spain knows well that flag of fiery fame,
Spain knows who leads those files across the sea;
Implacable, invincible, his name
El Draque, creeps hissing through her ranks to lee;
But now she holds the rolling heavens in fee,
His ships are few. *They surge across the foam,*
The hunt is up! But need the mountains flee

Or fear the snarling wolf-pack? Let them come!
They crouch, but dare not leap upon the flanks of Rome.

Nearer they come and nearer! Nay, prepare!
Close your huge ranks that sweep from sky to sky!
Madness itself would shrink; but Drake will dare
Eternal hell! Let the great signal fly—
Close up your ranks; El Draque comes down to die!
El Draque is brave! The vast sea-cities loom
Thro' heaven: Spain spares one smile of chivalry,
One wintry smile across her cannons' gloom
As that frail fleet full-sail comes rushing tow'rds its doom.

Suddenly, as the wild change of a dream,
Even as the Spaniards watched those lean sharp prows
Leap straight at their huge hulks, watched well content,
Knowing their foes, once grappled, must be doomed;
Even as they caught the rush and hiss of foam
Across that narrow, dwindling gleam of sea,
And heard, abruptly close, the sharp commands

And steady British answers, caught one glimpse
Of bare-armed seamen waiting by their guns,
The vision changed! The ships of England swerved
Swiftly—a volley of flame and thunder swept
Blinding the buffeted air, a volley of iron
From four sheer broadsides, crashing thro' a hulk
Of Spain. She reeled, blind in the fiery surge
And fury of that assault. So swift it seemed
That as she heeled to leeward, ere her guns
Trained on the foe once more, the sulphurous cloud
That wrapped the sea, once, twice, and thrice again
Split with red thunder-claps that rent and raked
Her huge beams through and through. Ay, as she heeled
To leeward still, her own grim cannon belched
Their lava skyward, wounding the void air,
And, as by miracle, the ships of Drake
Were gone. Along the Spanish rear they swept
From North to South, raking them as they went
At close range, hardly a pistol-shot away,
With volley on volley. Never Spain had seen
Seamen or marksmen like to these who sailed

Two knots against her one. They came and went,
Suddenly neared or sheered away at will
As if by magic, pouring flame and iron
In four full broadsides thro' some Spanish hulk
Ere one of hers burst blindly at the sky.
Southward, along the Spanish rear they swept,
Then swung about, and volleying sheets of flame,
Iron, and death, along the same fierce road
Littered with spars, reeking with sulphurous fumes,
Returned, triumphantly rushing, all their sails
Alow, aloft, full-bellied with the wind.

Then, then, from sky to sky, one mighty surge
  Of baleful pride, huge wrath, stormy disdain,
With shuddering clouds and towers of sail would urge
  Onward the heaving citadels of Spain,
Which dragged earth's thunders o'er the groaning main,
  And held the panoplies of faith in fee,
Beating against the wind, struggling in vain
  To close with that swift ocean cavalry:
Spain had all earth in charge! Had England, then, the
    sea?

Spain had the mountains—mountains flow like clouds!

Spain had great kingdoms—kingdoms melt away!
Yet, in that crescent, army on army crowds,
How shall she fear what seas or winds can say?—
The seas that leap and shine round earth's decay,
The winds that mount and sing while empires fall,
And mountains pass like waves in the wind's way,
And dying gods thro' shuddering twilights call;
Had England, then, the sea that sweeps o'er one and all?

See, in gigantic wrath the *Rata* hurls
Her mighty prows round to the wild sea-wind:
The deep like one black maelstrom round her swirls
While great Recaldé follows hard behind:
Reeling, like Titans, thunder-blasted, blind,
They strive to cross the ships of England—yea,
Challenge them to the grapple, and only find
Red broadsides bursting o'er the bursting spray,
And England surging still along her windward way!

To windward still *Revenge* and *Raleigh* flash
And thunder, and the sea flames red between:
In vain against the wind the galleons crash
And plunge and pour blind volleys thro' the screen

Of rolling sulphurous clouds at dimly seen
  Topsails that, to and fro, like sea-birds fly!
Ever to leeward the great hulks careen;
  Their thousand cannon can but wound the sky,
While England's little *Rainbow* foams and flashes by.

Suddenly the flag-ship of Recaldé, stung
To fury it seemed, heeled like an avalanche
To leeward, then reeled out beyond the rest
Against the wind, alone, daring the foe
To grapple her. At once the little *Revenge*
With Drake's flag flying flashed at her throat,
And hardly a cable's-length away out-belched
Broadside on broadside, under those great cannon,
Crashing through five-foot beams, four shots to one,
While Howard and the rest swept to and fro
Keeping at deadly bay the rolling hulks
That looming like Leviathans now plunged
Desperately against the freshening wind
To rescue the great flag-ship where she lay
Alone, amid the cannonades of Drake,
Alone, like a volcanic island lashed

With crimson hurricanes, dinning the winds
With isolated thunders, flaking the skies
With wrathful lava, while great spars and blocks
Leapt through the cloudy glare and fell, far off,
Like small black stones into the hissing sea.

Oquendo saw her peril far away!
His rushing prow thro' heaven begins to loom,
Oquendo, first in all that proud array,
Hath heart the pride of Spain to reassume:
He comes; the rolling seas are dusked with gloom
Of his great sails! Now round him once again,
Thrust out your oars, ye mighty hulks of doom;
Forward, with hiss of whip and clank of chain!
Let twice ten hundred slaves bring on the wrath of Spain!

Sidonia comes! Toledo comes!—huge ranks
That rally against the storm from sky to sky,
As down the dark blood-rusted chain-locked planks
Of labouring galleys the dark slave-guards ply
Their knotted scourges, and the red flakes fly
From bare scarred backs that quiver and heave once more,

And slaves that heed not if they live or die
  Pull with numb arms at many a red-stained oar,
Nor know the sea's dull crash from cannon's growing
    roar.

Bring on the wrath! From heaven to rushing heaven
  The white foam sweeps around their fierce array;
In vain before their shattering crimson levin
  The ships of England flash and dart away:
Not England's heart can hold that host at bay!
  See, a swift signal shoots along her line,
Her ships are scattered; they fly, they fly like spray
  Driven against the wind by wrath divine,
While, round Recaldé now, Sidonia's cannon shine.

The wild sea-winds with golden trumpets blaze!
  One wave will wash away the crimson stain
That blots Recaldé's decks. Her first amaze
  Is over: down the Channel once again
Turns the triumphant pageantry of Spain
  In battle-order, now. Behind her, far,
While the broad sun sinks to the Western main,
  Glitter the little ships of England's war,
And over them in heaven glides out the first white star.

The sun goes down: the heart of Spain is proud:

Her censers fume, her golden trumpets blow!
Into the darkening East with cloud on cloud
Of broad-flung sail her huge sea-castles go:
Rich under blazoned poops like rose-flushed snow
Tosses the foam. Far off the sunset gleams:
Her banners like a thousand sunsets glow,
As down the darkening East the pageant streams,
Full-fraught with doom for England, rigged with princely dreams.

Nay, "rigged with curses dark," as o'er the waves
Drake watched them slowly sweeping into the gloom
That thickened down the Channel, watched them go
In ranks compact, roundels impregnable,
With Biscay's bristling, broad-beamed squadron drawn
Behind for rear-guard. As the sun went down
Drake flew the council-flag. Across the sea
That gleamed still like a myriad-petalled rose
Up to the little *Revenge* the pinnaces foamed.
There, on Drake's powder-grimed escutcheoned poop

They gathered, Admirals and great flag-captains,
Hawkins, Frobisher, shining names and famous,
And some content to serve and follow and fight
Where duty called unknown, but heroes all.
High on the poop they clustered, gazing East
With faces dark as iron against the flame
Of sunset, eagle-faces, iron lips,
And keen eyes fiercely flashing as they turned
Like sword-flames now, or dark and deep as night
Watching the vast Armada slowly mix
Its broad-flung sails with twilight where it dragged
Thro' thickening heavens its curdled storm of clouds
Down the wide darkening Channel.
"My Lord Howard,"
Said Drake, "it seems we have but scarred the skins
Of those huge hulks: the hour grows late for England.
'Twere well to handle them again at once." A growl
Of fierce approval answered; but Lord Howard
Cried out, "Attack we cannot, save at risk

Of our whole fleet. It is not death I fear,
But England's peril. We have fought all day,
Accomplished nothing! Half our powder is
spent!
I think it best to hang upon their flanks
Till we be reinforced!"
"My lord," said Drake,
"Had we that week to spare for which I prayed,
And were we handling them in Spanish seas,
We might delay. There is no choosing now.
Yon hulks of doom are steadfastly resolved
On one tremendous path and solid end—
To join their powers with Parma's thirty thousand
(Not heeding our light horsemen of the sea),
Then in one earthquake of o'erwhelming arms
Roll Europe over England. They've not grasped
The first poor thought which now and evermore
Must be the sceptre of Britain, the steel trident
Of ocean sovereignty. That mighty fleet
Invincible, impregnable, omnipotent,
Must here and now be shattered, never be joined
With Parma, never abase the wind-swept sea,
With oaken roads for thundering legions
To trample in the splendour of the sun

From Europe to our island.

As for food,
In yonder enemy's fleet there is food enough
To feed a nation; ay, and powder enough
To split an empire. I will answer for it
Ye shall not lack of either, nor for shot,
Not though ye pluck them out of your own beams
To feed your hungry cannon. Cast your bread
Upon the waters. Think not of the Queen!
She will not send it! For she hath not known
(How could she know) this wide new realm of hers,
When we ourselves—her seamen—scarce have learnt
What means this kingdom of the ocean sea
To England and her throne—food, life-blood, life!
She could not understand who, when our ships
Put out from Plymouth, hardly gave them store
Of powder and shot to last three fighting days,
Or rations even for those. Blame not the Queen,
Who hath striven for England as no king hath fought
Since England was a nation. Bear with me,

For I must pour my heart before you now
This one last time. Yon fishing-boats have brought
Tidings how on this very day she rode
Before her mustered pikes at Tilbury.
Methinks I see her riding down their lines
High on her milk-white Barbary charger, hear
Her voice—'My people, though my flesh be woman,
My heart is of your kingly lion's breed:
I come myself to lead you!' I see the sun
Shining upon her armour, hear the voice
Of all her armies roaring like one sea—
God save Elizabeth, our English Queen!
'God save her,' I say, too; but still she dreams,
As all too many of us—bear with me!—dream,
Of Creçy, when our England's war was thus;
When we, too, hurled our hosts across the deep
As now Spain dreams to hurl them on our isle.
But now our war is otherwise. We claim
The sea's command, and Spain shall never land
One swordsman on our island. Blame her not,
But look not to the Queen. The people fight
This war of ours, not princes. In this hour

God maketh us a people. We have seen
Victories, never victory like to this,
When in our England's darkest hour of need
Her seamen, without wage, powder, or food,
Are yet on fire to fight for her. Your ships
Tossing in the great sunset of an Empire,
Dawn of a sovereign people, are all manned
By heroes, raggèd, hungry, who will die
Like flies ere long, because they have no food
But turns to fever-breeding carrion
Not fit for dogs. They are half-naked, hopeless
Living, of any reward; and if they die
They die a dog's death. We shall reap the fame
While they—great God! and all this cannot quench
The glory in their eyes. They will be served
Six at a mess of four, eking it out
With what their own rude nets may catch by night,
Silvering the guns and naked arms that haul
Under the stars with silver past all price,
While some small ship-boy in the black crow's nest
Watches across the waters for the foe.
My lord, it is a terrible thing for Spain

When poor men thus go out against her princes;
For so God whispers 'Victory' in our ears,
I cannot dare to doubt it."
Once again
A growl of fierce approval answered him,
And Hawkins cried—"I stand by Francis Drake";
But Howard, clinging to his old-world order,
Yet with such manly strength as dared to rank
Drake's wisdom of the sea above his own,
Sturdily shook his head. "I dare not risk
A close attack. Once grappled we are doomed.
We'll follow on their trail no less, with Drake
Leading. Our oriflamme to-night shall be
His cresset and stern-lanthorn. Where that shines
We follow."
Drake, still thinking in his heart,—
"And if Spain be not shattered here and now
We are doomed no less," must even rest content
With that good vantage.
As the sunset died
Over the darkling emerald seas that swelled
Before the freshening wind, the pinnaces dashed
To their own ships; and into the mind of Drake

There stole a plot that twitched his lips to a smile.
High on the heaving purple of the poop
Under the glimmer of firm and full-blown sails
He stood, an iron statue, glancing back
Anon at his stern-cresset's crimson flare,
The star of all the shadowy ships that plunged
Like ghosts amid the grey stream of his wake,
And all around him heard the low keen song
Of hidden ropes above the wail and creak
Of blocks and long low swish of cloven foam,
A keen rope-music in the formless night,
A harmony, a strong intent good sound,
Well-strung and taut, singing the will of man.
"Your oriflamme," he muttered,—"so you travail
With sea-speech in the tongue of old Poictiers—
Shall be my own stern-lanthorn. Watch it well,
My good Lord Howard."
Over the surging seas
The little *Revenge* went swooping on the trail,
Leading the ships of England. One by one
Out of the gloom before them slowly crept,
Sinister gleam by gleam, like blood-red stars,
The rearmost lanthorns of the Spanish Fleet,

A shaggy purple sky of secret storm
Heaving from north to south upon the black
Breast of the waters. Once again with lips
Twitched to a smile, Drake suddenly bade them crowd
All sail upon the little *Revenge*. She leapt
Forward. Smiling he watched the widening gap
Between the ships that followed and her light,
Then as to those behind, its flicker must seem
Wellnigh confused with those of Spain, he cried,
"Now, master bo'sun, quench their oriflamme,
Dip their damned cresset in the good black Sea!
The rearmost light of Spain shall lead them now,
A little closer, if they think it ours.
Pray God, they come to blows!"
Even as he spake,
His cresset-flare went out in the thick night:
A fluttering as of blind bewildered moths
A moment seized upon the shadowy ships
Behind him, then with crowded sail they steered
Straight for the rearmost cresset-flare of Spain.

BOOK XII

MEANWHILE, as in the gloom he slipped aside
Along the Spanish ranks, waiting the crash
Of battle, suddenly Drake became aware
Of strange sails bearing up into the wind
Around his right, and thought, "the Armada strives
To weather us in the dark." Down went his helm,
And all alone the little *Revenge* gave chase,
Till as the moon crept slowly forth, she stood
Beside the ghostly ships, only to see
Bewildered Flemish merchantmen, amazed
With fears of Armageddon—such vast shrouds
Had lately passed them on the rolling seas.
Down went his helm again, with one grim curse
Upon the chance that led him thus astray;
And down the wind the little *Revenge* once more
Swept on the trail. Fainter and fainter now

Glared the red beacons on the British coasts,
And the wind slackened and the glimmering East
Greyed and reddened, yet Drake had not regained
Sight of the ships. When the full glory of dawn
Dazzled the sea, he found himself alone,
With one huge galleon helplessly drifting
A cable's-length away. Around her prow,
Nuestra Señora del Rosario,
Richly emblazoned, gold on red, proclaimed
The flagship of great Valdes, of the fleet
Of Andalusia, captain-general. She,
Last night, in dark collision with the hulks
Of Spain, had lost her foremast. Through the night
Her guns, long rank on deadly rank, had kept
All enemies at bay. Drake summoned her
Instantly to surrender. She returned
A scornful answer from the glittering poop
Where two-score officers crowned the golden sea
And stained the dawn with blots of richer colour
Loftily clustered in the glowing sky,
Doubleted with cramoisy velvet, wreathed
With golden chains, blazing with jewelled swords

And crusted poignards. "What proud haste was
this?"
They asked, glancing at their huge tiers of cannon
And crowded decks of swarthy soldiery;
"What madman in yon cockle-shell defied Spain?"
"Tell them it is El Draque," he said, "who
lacks
The time to parley; therefore it will be well
They strike at once, for I am in great haste."
There, at the sound of that renownèd name,
Without a word down came their blazoned flag!
Like a great fragment of the dawn it lay
Crumpled upon their decks. . . .

Into the soft bloom and Italian blue
Of sparkling, ever-beautiful Torbay,
Belted as with warm Mediterranean crags,
The little *Revenge* foamed with her mighty prize,
A prize indeed—not for the casks of gold
Drake split in the rich sunlight and poured out
Like dross amongst his men, but in her hold
Lay many tons of powder, worth their weight
In rubies now to Britain. Into the hands

Of swarthy Brixham fishermen he gave
Prisoners and prize, then—loaded stem to stern
With powder and shot—their swiftest trawlers flew
Like falcons following a thunder-cloud
Behind him, as with crowded sail he rushed
On England's trail once more. Like a caged lion
Drake paced his deck, praying he yet might reach
The fight in time; and ever the warm light wind
Slackened. Not till the sun was half-way fallen
Once more crept out in front those dusky thrones
Of thunder, heaving on the smooth bright sea
From North to South with Howard's clustered fleet
Like tiny clouds, becalmed, not half a mile
Behind the Spaniards. For the breeze had failed
Their blind midnight pursuit; and now attack
Seemed hopeless. Even as Drake drew nigh, the last
Breath of the wind sank. One more day had flown,
Nought was accomplished; and the Armada lay
Some leagues of golden sea-way nearer now

To its great goal. The sun went down: the moon
Rose glittering. Hardly a cannon-shot apart
The two fleets lay becalmed upon the silver
Swell of the smooth night-tide. The hour had
come
For Spain to strike. The ships of England drifted
Helplessly, at the mercy of those great hulks
Oared by their thousand slaves.
Onward they came,
Swinging suddenly in tremendous gloom
Over the silver seas. But even as Drake,
With eyes on fire at last for his last fight,
Measured the distance ere he gave the word
To greet it with his cannon, suddenly
The shining face of the deep began to shiver
With dusky patches: the doomed English sails
Quivered and, filling smart from the Northeast,
The little *Revenge* rushed down their broken line
Signalling them to follow, and ere they knew
What miracle had saved them, they all sprang
Their luff and ran large out to sea. For now
The Armada lay to windward, and to fight
Meant to be grappled and overwhelmed; but dark

Within the mind of Drake, a fiercer plan
Already had shaped itself.
"They fly! They fly!"
Rending the heavens from twice ten thousand throats
A mighty shout rose from the Spanish Fleet.
Over the moonlit waves their galleons came
Towering, crowding, plunging down the wind
In full chase, while the tempter, Drake, laughed low
To watch their solid battle-order break
And straggle. When once more the golden dawn
Dazzled the deep, the labouring galleons lay
Scattered by their unequal speed. The wind
Veered as the sun rose. Once again the ships
Of England lay to windward. Down swooped Drake
Where like a mountain the *San Marcos* heaved
Her giant flanks alone, having outsailed
Her huge companions. Then the sea-winds blazed
With broadsides. Two long hours the sea flamed red
All round her. One by one the Titan ships

THE DEFEAT OF THE SPANISH ARMADA

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Came surging to her rescue, and met the buffet
Of battle-thunders, belching iron and flame;
Nor could they pluck her forth from that red chaos
Till great Oquendo hurled his mighty prows
Crashing athwart those thunders, and once more
Gathered into unshakeable battle-order
The whole Armada raked the reeking seas.
Then up the wind the ships of England sheered
Once more, and one more day drew to its close,
With little accomplished, half their powder spent,
And all the Armada moving as of old,
From sky to sky one heaven-wide zone of storm
(Though some three galleons out of all their host
Laboured woundily) down the darkening Channel.
And all night long on England's guardian heights
The beacons reddened, and all the next long day
The impregnable Armada never swerved
From its tremendous path. In vain did Drake,
Frobisher, Hawkins, Howard, greatest names
In all our great sea-history, hover and dart
Like falcons round the mountainous array.
Till now, as night fell and they lay abreast
Of the Isle of Wight, once more the council flag

Flew from the little *Revenge*. With iron face
Thrust close to Howard's, and outstretched iron arm,
Under the stars Drake pointed down the coast
Where the red beacons flared. "The shoals," he hissed,
"The shoals from Owers to Spithead and the net
Of channels yonder in Portsmouth Roads. At dawn
They'll lie to leeward of the Invincible
Fleet!"

Swiftly, in mighty sweeping lines Drake set
Before the council his fierce battle-plan
To drive the Armada down upon the banks
And utterly shatter it—stroke by well-schemed stroke
As he unfolded there his vital plot
And touched their dead cold warfare into life,
Where plan before was none, he seemed to tower
Above them, clad with the deep night of stars;
And those that late would rival knew him now,
In all his great simplicity, their king,
One of the gods of battle, England's Drake,

A soul that summoned Cæsar from his grave.
And swept with Alexander o'er the deep.
So when the dawn thro' rolling wreaths of cloud
Struggled, and all the waves were molten gold,
The heart of Spain exulted, for she saw
The little fleet of England cloven in twain
As if by some strange discord. A light breeze
Blew from the ripening East; and, up against it,
Urged by the very madness of defeat,
Or so it seemed, one half the British fleet
Drew nigh, towed by their boats, to challenge the vast
Tempest-winged heaving citadels of Spain,
At last to the murderous grapple; while far away
Their other half, led by the flag of Drake,
Stood out to sea, as if to escape the doom
Of that sheer madness, for the light wind now
Could lend them no such wings to hover and swoop
As heretofore. Nearer the mad ships came
Towed by their boats, till now upon their right
To windward loomed the Fleet Invincible
With all its thunder-clouds, and on their left
To leeward, gleamed the perilous white shoals

With their long level lightnings under the cliffs
Of England, from the green glad garden of Wight
To the Owers and Selsea Bill. Right on they came,
And suddenly the wrench of thundering cannon
Shook the vast hulks that towered above them. Red
Flamed the blue sea between. Thunder to thunder
Answered, and still the ships of Drake sped out
To the open sea. Sidonia saw them go,
Furrowing the deep that like a pale-blue shield
Lay diamond-dazzled now in the full light.
Rich was the omen of that day for Spain,
The feast-day of Sidonia's patron-saint!
And the priests chanted and the trumpets blew
Triumphantly! A universal shout
Went skyward from the locust-swarming decks,
A shout that rent the golden morning clouds
From heaven to menacing heaven, as castle to castle
Flew the great battle-signal, and like one range
Of moving mountains, those almighty ranks

Swept down upon the small forsaken ships!
The lion's brood was in the imperial nets
Of Rome at last. Onward the mountains came
With all their golden clouds of sail and flags
Like streaming cataracts; all their glorious chasms
And glittering steeps, echoing, re-echoing,
Calling, answering, as with the herald winds
That blow the golden trumpets of the morning
From Skiddaw to Helvellyn. In the midst
The great *San Martin* surged with heaven-wide
press
Of proudly billowing sail; and yet once more
Slowly, solemnly, like another dawn
Up to her mast-head soared in thunderous gold
The sacred standard of their last crusade;
While round a hundred prows that heaved thro'
heaven
Like granite cliffs, their black wet shining flanks,
And swept like moving promontories, rolled
The splendid long-drawn thunders of the foam,
And flashed the untamed white lightnings of the
sea
Back to a morn unhalyarded of man,

Back to the unleashed sun and blazoned clouds
And azure sky—the unfettered flag of God.

Like one huge moving coast-line on they came
  Crashing, and closed the ships of England round
With one fierce crescent of thunder and sweeping flame,
  One crimson scythe of Death, whose long sweep
    drowned
The eternal ocean with its mighty sound,
  From heaven to heaven, one roar, one glitter of doom,
While out to the sea-line's blue remotest bound
  The ships of Drake still fled, and the red fume
Of battle thickened and shrouded shoal and sea with
    gloom.

The distant sea, the close white menacing shoals
  Are shrouded! And the lion's brood fight on!
And now death's very midnight round them rolls;
  Rent is the flag that late so proudly shone:
The red decks reel, and their last hope seems gone!
  Round them they still keep clear one ring of sea:
It narrows; but the lion's brood fight on,
  Ungrappled still, still fearless and still free,
While the white menacing shoals creep slowly out to lee.

Now through the red rents of each fire-cleft cloud,
  High o'er the British blood-greased decks flash out
Thousands of swarthy faces, crowd on crowd
  Surging, with one tremendous hurricane shout
On, to the grapple! and still the grim redoubt
  Of the oaken bulwarks rolls them back again,
As buffeted waves that shatter in the furious bout
  When cannonading cliffs meet the full main
And hurl it back in smoke,—so Britain hurls back
    Spain;

Hurls her back, only to see her return,
  Darkening the heavens with billow on billow of sail:
Round that huge storm the waves like lava burn,
  The daylight withers, and the sea-winds fail!
Seamen of England, what shall now avail
  Your naked arms? Before those blasts of doom
The sun is quenched, the very sea-waves quail:
  High overhead their triumphing thousands loom,
When hark! what low deep guns to windward suddenly
    boom?

What low deep strange new thunders far away
  Respond to the triumphant shout of Spain?
Is it the wind that shakes their giant array?

Is it the deep wrath of the rising main?
Is it—*El Draque?* El Draque! Ay, shout again,
His thunders burst upon your windward flanks;
The shoals creep out to leeward! Is it plain
At last, what earthquake heaves your herded ranks
Huddled in huge dismay tow'rds those white foam-swept banks?

Plain, it was plain at last, what cunning lured,
What courage held them over the jaws o' the pit,
Till Drake could hurl them down. The little ships
Of Howard and Frobisher, towed by their boats,
Slipped away in the smoke, while out at sea
Drake, with a gale of wind behind him, crashed
Volley on volley into the helpless rear
Of Spain and drove it down, huddling the whole
Invincible Fleet together upon the verge
Of doom. One awful surge of stormy wrath
Heaved thro' the struggling citadels of Spain.
From East to West their desperate signal flew,
And like a drove of bullocks, with the foam
Flecking their giant sides, they staggered and swerved,

Careening tow'rds the shallows as they turned,
Then in one wild stampede of sheer dismay
Rushed, tacking seaward, while the grey sea plain
Smoked round them, and the cannonades of Drake
Raked their wild flight; and their crusading flag,
Tangled in one black maze of crashing spars,
Whirled downward like the pride of Lucifer
From heaven to hell.
Out tow'rds the coasts of France
They plunged, narrowly weathering the Ower banks;
Then, once again, they formed in ranks compact,
Roundels impregnable, wrathfully bent at last
Never to swerve again from their huge path
And solid end—to join with Parma's host,
And hurl the whole of Europe on our isle.
Another day was gone, much powder spent;
And, while Lord Howard exulted and conferred
Knighthoods on his brave seamen, Drake alone
Knew that his mighty plan, in spite of all,
Had failed,—knew that wellnigh his last great chance
Was lost of wrecking the Spaniards ere they joined

Parma. The night went by, and the next day,
With scarce a visible scar the Invincible Fleet
Drew onward tow'rds its goal, unshakeable now
In that grim battle-order. Beacons flared
Along the British coast, and pikes flashed out
All night, and a strange dread began to grip
The heart of England, as it seemed the might
Of seamen most renowned in all the world
Checked not that huge advance. Yet at the heart
Of Spain no less there clung a vampire fear
And strange foreboding, as the next day passed
Quietly, and behind her all day long
The shadowy ships of Drake stood on her trail
Quietly, patiently, as death or doom,
Unswerving and implacable.

While the sun
Sank thro' long crimson fringes on that eve,
The fleets were passing Calais, and the wind
Blew fair behind them. A strange impulse seized
Spain to shake off those bloodhounds from her trail,
And suddenly the whole Invincible Fleet
Anchored, in hope the following wind would bear

The ships of England past and carry them down
To leeward. But their grim insistent watch
Was ready; and though their van had wellnigh crashed
Into the rear of Spain, in the golden dusk,
They, too, a cannon-shot away, at once
Anchored, to windward still.

Quietly heaved
The golden sea in that tremendous hour
Fraught with the fate of Europe and mankind,
As yet once more the flag of council flew,
And Hawkins, Howard, Frobisher, and Drake
Gathered together upon the little *Revenge,*
While like a triumphing fire the news was borne
To Spain, already, that the Invincible Fleet
Had reached its end, ay, and " that great black dog
Sir Francis Drake " was writhing now in chains
Beneath the torturer's hands.

High on his poop
He stood, a granite rock, above the throng
Of captains, there amid the breaking waves
Of clashing thought and swift opinion,
Silent, gazing where now the cool fresh wind

Blew steadily up the terrible North Sea
Which rolled under the clouds into a gloom
Unfathomable. Once only his lips moved
Half-consciously, breathing those mighty words,
The clouds His chariot! Then, suddenly, he turned
And looked upon the little flock of ships
That followed on the fleet of England, sloops
Helpless in fight. These, manned by the brave zeal
Of many a noble house, from hour to hour
Had plunged out from the coast to join his flag.
"Better if they had brought us powder and food
Than sought to join us thus," he had growled; but now
"Lord God," he cried aloud, "they'll light our road
To victory yet!" And in great sweeping strokes
Once more he drew his mighty battle-plan
Before the captains. In the thickening gloom
They stared at his grim face as at a man
Risen from hell, with all the powers of hell
At his command,—a face tempered like steel

In the everlasting furnaces, a rock
Of adamant, while with a voice that blent
With the ebb and flow of the everlasting sea
He spake, and at the low deep menacing words
Monotonous with the unconquerable
Passion and level strength of his great soul
They shuddered; for the man seemed more than man,
And from his iron lips resounded doom
As from the lips of cannon—doom to Spain,
Inevitable, unconquerable doom.

And through that mighty host of Spain there crept
Cold winds of fear, as to the darkening sky
Once more from lips of kneeling thousands swept
The vespers of an Empire—one vast cry,
SALVE REGINA! God, what wild reply
Hissed from the clouds in that dark hour of dreams?
AVE MARIA, *those about to die*
Salute thee! See, what ghostly pageant streams
Above them? What thin hands point down like pale moonbeams?

Thick as the ghosts that Dante saw in hell
Whirled on the blast thro' boundless leagues of pain,

Thick, thick as wind-blown leaves innumerable,
In the Inquisition's yellow robes her slain
And tortured thousands, dense as the red rain
That wellnigh quenched her fires, went hissing by
With twisted shapes, raw from the racks of Spain,
SALVE REGINA!—rushing thro' the sky,
And pale hands pointing down and lips that mocked her cry.

Ten thousand times ten thousand!—what are these
That are arrayed in yellow robes and sweep
Between your prayers and God like phantom seas
Prophesying over your masts? Could Rome not keep
The keys? Who loosed these dead to break your sleep?
SALVE REGINA, cry, yea, cry aloud,
AVE MARIA! Ye have sown: shall ye not reap?
SALVE REGINA! Christ, what fiery cloud
Suddenly rolls to windward, high o'er mast and shroud?

Are hell-gates burst at last? For the black deep
To windward burns with streaming crimson fires!
Over the wild strange waves, they shudder and creep
Nearer—strange smoke-wreathed masts and spars, red spires

'And blazing hulks, vast roaring blood-red pyres,
Fierce as the flames ye fed with flesh of men
'Amid the imperial pomp and chanting choirs
Of Alva—from El Draque's red hand again
Sweep the wild fire-ships down upon the Fleet of Spain.

Onward before the freshening wind they come
Full fraught with all the terrors, all the bale
That flamed so long for the delight of Rome,
The shrieking fires that struck the sunlight pale,
The avenging fires at last! Now what avail
Your thousand ranks of cannon? Swift, cut free,
Cut your scorched cables! Cry, reel backward, quail,
Crash your huge huddled ranks together, flee!
Behind you roars the fire, before—the dark North Sea!

. . . . . .

Dawn, everlasting and omnipotent
Dawn rolled in crimson o'er the spar-strewn waves,
'As the last trumpet shall in thunder roll
O'er heaven and earth and ocean. Far away,
The ships of Spain, great raggéd piles of gloom
'And shaggy splendour, leaning to the North
Like sun-shot clouds confused, or rent apart
In scattered squadrons, furiously plunged,

Burying their mighty prows i' the broad grey rush
Of smoking billowy hills, or heaving high
Their giant bowsprits to the wandering heavens,
Labouring in vain to return, struggling to lock
Their far-flung ranks anew, but drifting still
To leeward, driven by the ever-increasing storm
Straight for the dark North Sea. Hard by there lurched
One gorgeous galleon on the ravening shoals,
Feeding the white maw of the famished waves
With gold and purple webs from kingly looms
And spilth of world-wide empires. Howard, still
Planning to pluck the Armada plume by plume,
Swooped down upon that prey and swiftly engaged
Her desperate guns; while Drake, our ocean king,
Knowing the full worth of that doom-fraught hour,
Glanced neither to the left nor right, but stood
High on his poop, with calm implacable face
Gazing as into eternity, and steered
The crowded glory of his dawn-flushed sails
In superb onset, straight for the great fleet
Invincible; and after him the main
Of England's fleet, knowing its captain now,

Followed, and with them rushed—from sky to sky
One glittering charge of wrath—the storm's white
waves,
The twenty thousand foaming chariots
Of God
None but the everlasting voice
Of him who fought at Salamis might sing
The fight of that dread Sabbath. Not mankind
Waged it alone. War waged in heaven that day,
Where Michael and his angels drave once more
The hosts of darkness ruining down the abyss
Of chaos. Light against darkness, Liberty
Against all dark old despotism, unsheathed
The sword in that great hour. Behind the strife
Of men embattled deeps beyond all thought
Moved in their awful panoply, as move
Silent, invisible, swift, under the clash
Of waves and flash of foam, huge ocean glooms
And vast reserves of inappellable power.
The bowsprits ranked on either fore-front seemed
But spear-heads of those dread antagonists
Invisible: the shuddering sails of Spain
Dusk with the shadow of death, the sunward sails

Of England full-fraught with the breath of God.
Onward the ships of England and God's waves
Triumphantly charged, glittering companions,
And poured their thunders on the extreme right
Of Spain, whose giant galleons as they lurched
Heavily to the roughening sea and wind
With all their grinding, wrenching cannon, worked
On rolling platforms by the helpless hands
Of twenty thousand soldiers, without skill
In stormy seas, rent the indifferent sky
Or tore the black troughs of the swirling deep
In vain, while volley on volley of flame and iron
Burst thro' their four-foot beams, fierce raking blasts
From ships that came and went on wings of the wind
All round their mangled bulk, scarce a pike's thrust
Away, sweeping their decks from stem to stern
(Between the rush and roar of the great green waves)
With crimson death, rending their timbered towns
And populous floating streets into wild squares
Of slaughter and devastation; driving them down,

Huddled on their own centre, cities of shame
And havoc, in fiery forests of tangled wrath,
With hurricanes of huge masts and swarming spars
And multitudinous decks that heaved and sank
Like earthquake-smitten palaces, when doom
Comes, with one stride, across the pomp of kings.
All round them shouted the everlasting sea,
Burst in white thunders on the streaming poops
And blinded fifty thousand eyes with spray.
Once, as a gorgeous galleon, drenched with blood
Began to founder and settle, a British captain
Called from his bulwarks, bidding her fierce crew
Surrender and come aboard Straight through the heart
A hundred muskets answered that appeal.
Sink or destroy! The deadly signal flew
From mast to mast of England. Once, twice, thrice,
A huge sea-castle heaved her haggled bulk
Heavenward, and with a cry that rent the heavens
From all her crowded decks, and one deep roar
As of a cloven world or the dark surge
Of chaos yawning, sank: the swirling slopes

Of the sweeping billowy hills for a moment swarmed
With struggling insect-men, sprinkling the foam
With tossing arms; then the indifferent sea
Rolled its grey smoking waves across the place
Where they had been. Here a great galleasse poured
Red rivers through her scuppers and torn flanks,
And there a galleon, wrapped in creeping fire,
Suddenly like a vast volcano split
Asunder, and o'er the vomiting sulphurous clouds
And spouting spread of crimson, flying spars
And heads torn from their trunks and scattered limbs
Leapt, hideous gouts of death, against the glare.
Hardly the thrust of a pike away, the ships
Of England flashed and swerved, till in one mass
Of thunder-blasted splendour and shuddering gloom
Those gorgeous floating citadels huddled and shrank
Their towers, and all the glory of dawn that rolled
And burned along the tempest of their banners

Withered, as on a murderer's face the light
Withers before the accuser. All their proud
Castles and towers and heaven-wide clouds of sail
Shrank to a darkening horror, like the heart
Of Evil, plucked from midnight's fiercest gloom,
With all its curses quivering and alive;
A horror of wild masts and tangled spars,
Like some great kraken with a thousand arms
Torn from the filthiest cavern of the deep,
Writhing, and spewing forth its venomous fumes
On every side. *Sink or destroy!*—all day
The deadly signal flew; and ever the sea
Swelled higher, and the flashes of the foam
Broadened and leapt and spread as the wild
white fire
That flourishes with the wind; and ever the storm
Drave the grim battle onward to the wild
Menace of the dark North Sea. At set of sun,
Even as below the sea-line the broad disc
Sank like a red-hot cannon-ball through scurf
Of seething molten lead, the *Santa Maria*
Uttering one cry that split the heart of heaven
Went down with all hands, roaring into the dark.

Hardly five rounds of shot were left to Drake!
Gun after gun fell silent, as the night
Deepened—"Yet we must follow them to the North,"
He cried, "or they'll return yet to shake hands
With Parma! Come, we'll put a brag upon it,
And hunt them onward as we lacked for nought!"
So, when across the swinging smoking seas,
Grey and splendid and terrible broke the day
Once more, the flying Invincible fleet beheld
Upon their weather-beam, and dogging them
Like their own shadow, the dark ships of Drake,
Unswerving and implacable. Ever the wind
And sea increased; till now the heaving deep
Swelled all round them into sulky hills
And rolling mountains, whose majestic crests,
Like wild white flames far blown and savagely flickering,
Swept thro' the clouds; and, on their vanishing slopes,
Past the pursuing fleet began to swirl
Scores of horses and mules, drowning or drowned,
Cast overboard to lighten the wild flight

Of Spain, and save her water-casks, a trail
Telling of utmost fear. And ever the storm
Roared louder across the leagues of rioting sea,
Driving her onward like a mighty stag
Chased by the wolves. Off the dark Firth of Forth
At last, Drake signalled and lay head to wind,
Watching. "The chariots of God are twenty thousand,"
He muttered, as, for a moment close at hand,
Caught in some league-wide whirlpool of the sea,
The mighty galleons crowded and towered and plunged
Above him on the huge o'erhanging billows,
As if to crash down on his decks; the next,
A mile of ravening sea had swept between
Each of those wind-whipt straws and they were gone,
With all their tiny shrivelling scrolls of sail,
Through roaring deserts of embattled death,
Where like a hundred thousand chariots charged
With lightnings and with thunders, the great deep
Hurled them away to the North. From sky to sky

One blanching bursting storm of infinite seas
Followed them, broad white cataracts, hills that grasped
With struggling Titan hands at reeling heavens,
And roared their doom-fraught greetings from Cape Wrath
Round to the Bloody Foreland.
There should the yeast
Of foam receive the purple of many kings,
And the grim gulfs devour the blood-bought gold
Of Aztecs and of Incas, and the reefs,
League after league, bristle with mangled spars,
And all along their coast the murderous kerns
Of Catholic Ireland strip the gorgeous silks
And chains and jewel-encrusted crucifixes
From thousands dead, and slaughter thousands more
With gallow-glass axes as they blindly crept
Forth from the surf and jaggèd rocks to seek
Pity of their own creed.
To meet that doom
Drake watched their sails go shrivelling, till the last

Flicker of spars vanished as a skeleton leaf
Upon the blasts of winter, and there was nought
But one wide wilderness of splendour and gloom
Under the northern clouds.

"Not unto us,"
Cried Drake, "not unto us—but unto Him
Who made the sea, belongs our England now!
Pray God that heart and mind and soul we prove
Worthy among the nations of this hour
And this great victory, whose ocean fame
Shall wash the world with thunder till that day
When there is no more sea, and the strong cliffs
Pass like a smoke, and the last peal of it
Sounds thro' the trumpet."

So, with close-hauled sails,
Over the rolling triumph of the deep,
Lifting their hearts to heaven, they turned back home.

THE END

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